

A DETECTIVE IN KENT

Landscape Clues to the Discovery of Lost Seas



Written and Illustrated by

DONALD MAXWELL

A DETECTIVE IN KENT

IN this characteristic book Mr. Donald Maxwell applies the science of the unravelling of crime by means of observation and deduction to the re-discovery of Unknown Kent by means of infallible signs in the landscape. The observation and accumulation of clues in a landscape are of immense value, but the deductions made from them must be tested and cross-examined by reference to other light—history, etymology, architecture, agriculture, or knowledge of local conditions. Conversely, even learned conclusions must be tested by an accurate knowledge of the landscape.

The object of this book is to improve the powers of observation and deduction of ramblers and explorers in Kent, and the trained eye of the author, who is a sailor as well as a painter, shows us dockyards in green fields, harbours in meadowlands, and deep sea channels in ditches. We are piloted by Mr. Maxwell, with the help of charts and sketches, upon an inland voyage, and bit by bit the old coast-line of the Isle of Thanet is revealed and lost seas are traced out on a region which now rejoices in league upon league of grass-land.

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A DETECTIVE IN KENT

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"It is situated in grass land over two miles from the sea. It stands on the spot of our first imaginary island, and the name of the farm is Belle Isle."

A DETECTIVE IN KENT

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Discovery of Lost Seas

Written and Illustrated by
DONALD MAXWELL

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TO
COPLEY HEWITT

HIGH SHERIFF OF KENT AND ASSISTANT COUNTY COMMISSIONER
FOR SCOUTS IN THIS COUNTY

AND TO
ALL TRUE EXPLORERS

THIS PATHFINDING WORK IS
DEDICATED

IN THE HOPE THAT THOSE TO WHOM THE SCIENCE OF DEDUC-
TION APPEALS WILL FIND PLEASURE IN FORMING THEIR OWN
CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CLUES SET OUT IN THIS BOOK

November 1929



PREFACE

DETECTIVES are often wrong in their deductions. Again, they are often right. The art of observing and recording finger-prints is a science that must be mastered to some extent if finger-print evidence is to be of any use. The fact that sometimes deductions from finger-prints do not always lead to the criminal does not invalidate the method. Finger-prints may be "faked." They may be those of police investigators who have examined the place before you made your discoveries. There are a hundred and one other factors in the evidence beside finger-prints. These factors must be weighed and tested and finger-print clues may have to be modified.

In like manner the observation and accumulation of clues in a landscape are of immense value, but the deductions made from them must be tested and cross-examined by reference to

other light—history, etymology, architecture, agriculture, or knowledge of local conditions. Conversely, popular or even “learned” conclusions can be tested by an accurate knowledge of the landscape. Let us take a simple and entirely imaginary case. Professor X, the famous etymologist, writes that Shepstone is a name that is derived from ship and not from sheep and that it probably means ship’s tun or the enclosure by a harbour or quay. It is quite possible that Professor X has arrived at this conclusion from etymological evidence alone and has never been to Shepstone and knows little about it as a place.

We go to Shepstone and find that it is a small village at the top of a ridge of down six hundred feet high and out of sight of the sea. Therefore, whatever etymology has to say, the practical test of fact, i.e. that it could never have been a place connected in the remotest way with ships or quays is fairly conclusive.

The object of this work is to intensify and improve the powers of observation and deduction and enlarge the field of inquiry on the part

of ramblers and explorers in Kent with the special object of following the ancient coast-line of the Isle of Thanet, of unravelling the old delta of the River Rother in Romney Marsh and of tracing out lost seas upon a region which now rejoices in league upon league of grass-land.

DONALD MAXWELL

BORSTAL

ROCHESTER

September 21, 1929

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A DETECTIVE IN KENT

I

THE CLUE OF THE ISLAND FARM

I

THE CLUE OF THE ISLAND FARM

THE detection of crime by means of observation, deduction, and reconstruction of motive is a thing already built up into a science. That there could be such a thing as the science of reading landscape for the unravelling of its history has not occurred to very many. Scotland Yard has its Criminal Investigation Department. The Royal Academy should have its Landscape Interrogation Department.

In part this reading of history in landscape can already be done. I have an architect friend who can look down from the tower of a village church and by knowledge of architectural periods tell me a story of the development and decay of the village. But his trained knowledge stops at architecture. He could not discern by architectural forms that Corby was settled by Vikings coming from a point much farther south than the land of the sea-rovers who founded Applethwaite. He could not see any-

thing enlightening in the large number of primrose-bordered ponds in the lonely dell where two little white cottages rejoice in the name of Ordnance Place.

Now the philologist with a most elementary knowledge of navigation would be able to tell instantly the significance of the names Corby and Applethwaite. He would know that "by" is the Danish word for a farm settlement or village, and Corby lies up a river opposite to Denmark across the North Sea. He would know that "thwaite" is a Norwegian word meaning a forest clearing, and that a place like Applethwaite would be one of the Norwegian settlements. The Norwegian sea-rovers, dwelling much farther north than the Danish, would come down more directly upon Scotland, and it would be as easy for them to cruise along the western coast of our islands as the eastern, where the Danes were already in possession. Thus in Cumberland we find the names "fell," "force," and "thwaite," all Norwegian words; but there are few of Danish origin. Around the Humber and the Wash, however, there are hundreds of "bys" and "thorpes," Danish names, but few, if any, "thwaites."

A philologist, however, will be very instructive when he discourses upon place-names, but he

may be so ill-equipped with other subjects that he is practically blind to most of the things that the architect can read.

Likewise, the engineer might be able to tell us many facts about the furnaces of the Wealden ironmasters and see a hundred signs that the architect and philologist would never notice. What we want therefore for the equipment of the landscape detective is not so much highly specialized knowledge of one subject as an intelligent correlation of slight knowledge of many subjects.

An ideal landscape detective would be a superman who knows something of the outlook of a philologist, historian, sailor, engineer, architect, military strategist, student of comparative religion, geologist, and arborist. He must also possess a savour of humour, common sense, observation, and a knowledge of human nature.

Let us in our studies together begin at the very beginning and not think any point too small or too obvious to notice. It is just the very obvious that is so easy to miss.

We will not mind the most elementary deductions. We will note that Mile End is the end of a mile and Wallsend the end of a wall. Newcastle stands in the neighbourhood of an old castle and Pontefract is the place where the

bridge broke down in the brave days of old (*ad pontem fractum*).

The first of our adventures together shall be a dry cruise, starting from Reculver to see if we can to some extent read the significance of the landscape in this interesting corner of Kent.

A ship sailing to-day from London to Calais would come to the sea at Southend, and then, by means of channels almost out of sight of the Kentish shore, pass the Goodwins and set a course for Calais Roads. In the Middle Ages, however, a vessel leaving the Thames for the same destination would keep inland the whole way, except for the last twenty miles.

This seems incredible, but if you will take a map of Kent I will show you the route. In days when ships were small, beacons and lighthouses few, and progress maintained by what a sailor calls dead reckoning—that is, by calculation of position without knowledge of anything but the ship's direction, her speed, and the tide—it was advisable to sail with landmarks to give bearings. Now look at the map. A ship would come down Sea Reach till Allhallows was on her starboard beam. Still in the broad waters of the Thames, although the open sea would be visible ahead, she would turn towards an opening on the south and sail inside the Isle of

Grain, finding herself in the waters of the Medway. Then, across what are now marshes at Queenborough, she would enter the Swale and thus proceed inside the Isle of Sheppey.

She would emerge from the Swale at Whitstable, but, before she had got out of the shelter of the banks, she would continue inside the Isle of Thanet till she reached Sandwich, where she would wait for a favourable wind and steer for Calais. In those days, moreover, the Goodwins would be a more considerable bank than they are now, and there are those who say that they were then marshy islands, covered only at high water. In this case, the Downs would be like a tidal river, and the good ship would have only twenty miles of open sea.

One day I thought it would be a most fascinating adventure to make an inland voyage over some of this route. I should be on foot, or in a car, in reality, but, in imagination, beating up or running free in a fifty-ton vessel. Accordingly, I sought out the eastern entrance into the Wantsum, the channel that divided the Isle of Thanet from the mainland of Kent. There was a strong south-westerly breeze, and I had some difficulty, in imagination, in beating up into the channel in the teeth of the wind, but at last I entered the western harbour of the Roman

Regulbium and moored at the quay where now is the King Ethelbert Inn. I imagine that in Roman times the rise on which stand the Roman walls and the twin towers of the church was an island, and a causeway, dry at low tide, connected the fortress with the land. The main entrance, however, would have been on the other side to the east, where it must have been a mile or so across.

In my sketch opposite, which is made from the undulating high land to the west, by two farms with lovely old barns, you can see the general plan of the place. The rolling fields on the left tumble down suddenly to a short, flat interval that leads on to the little island. This interval I imagine to have been the western entrance. The numberless dykes and intersecting reedy waterways in the flat meadows to the right are evidently a continuation of this opening and where it joins the main channel.

The tree-covered ridge to the right of the buildings on the "island" hides the Roman walls of flint, which can still be seen. The story of the twin towers of the church is that they were built to commemorate two sisters who were wrecked here. Both got safely to the shore, but one died soon afterwards. These towers were once called the Sisters of Reculver,



RECVLVER

and were regarded as of such sanctity by sailors that no captain would dream of sailing past without dipping his topsail in their honour. The Brethren of Trinity House are responsible for the restoration necessary to maintain these landmarks, because they are indicated upon the chart.

A slight difficulty now arises in our pseudo-nautical ramble. It is impossible to find a path along the actual course taken by our ship, so we must leave her in the charge of the ghostly sailing-master and follow her course as best we can from the shore. In order to do this, we take the road that goes to Herne Bay, and pursuing it for a few hundred yards, turn to the left up a steepish hill. It is from the fields on the left of this that I have just made the sketch on page 9. Then we dip down again, and come to a farm with a wonderful red-brick Tudor gateway and a farm-house, which had evidently fallen into decay—judging by the state of the gateway—so that a new and not very inspiring front had to be built to it—unfortunately, in yellow brick. A stream runs out here, and there is a pond. Possibly this farm-house was once moated.

Then we go uphill again, cross the railway, and finally bear to the left. We do not take a small turning to the right, but go on past the

ruined stump of a windmill. Then we dip down steeply to a farm, and go through two gates. And here we are on the old sea-coast once more. There is our ship lying at anchor waiting for us. Across the water shows the tower of St. Nicholas-at-Wade on the shores of Thanet.

A more impressive little bit of landscape I do not think you could find, if you can see it, not as a marsh and a few ditches, but as an old sea-coast. Roman galleys have glided many a time and oft round this headland over which we have just come. If you cross one of the gateways over the water, you will see the towers of Reculver beyond the point. And then, if you go on a few hundred yards, you will come to a wonderful little bit of waterway—Venice in the country, a true piece of rural magic. There, three or four in succession, are little brick bridges leading from this coast round to the marsh across the dyke, and, if you have imagination, you can hear, in misty weather, the ships' bells in the Wantsum. The King's ships are waiting for the tide to Sandwich.

It seems to me a good thing in making observations to know what to look for. Let me take a simple illustration. An aircraft passes overhead at a great height. It starts coming to a lower level, and you wonder where it will land.

A friend is standing near, an air pilot, and he tells you instantly that it will land at A and not at B. To you it is still a mere speck, but the pilot looks for a little mark underneath it. He can see that this mark is made by the outline of floats and not of wheels, and so, being a sea-plane, it will land on the water at A and not at the aerodrome at B. The pilot's sight is no better than yours, but as he knows exactly what to look for, he can make the right deduction.

We will therefore draw a diagram (Fig. 1) to represent the sort of country we are exploring. T is an island at the corner of a piece of land jutting into the sea. The line R A B C D S would once have been the coast-line of this promontory. The sea, however, has broken through, and there is a wide estuary separating it from the mainland, the coast of which is R G H S.

Let us assume that the strongest and most prevalent winds blow from the north-east, the direction indicated by the arrow at the right-hand top corner. Also we must assume that tides sweep in and out the estuary from both S and R. The effect upon this island will be to make the coast-line at A B C D steep. If the formation is chalk, it will be worn into cliffs by

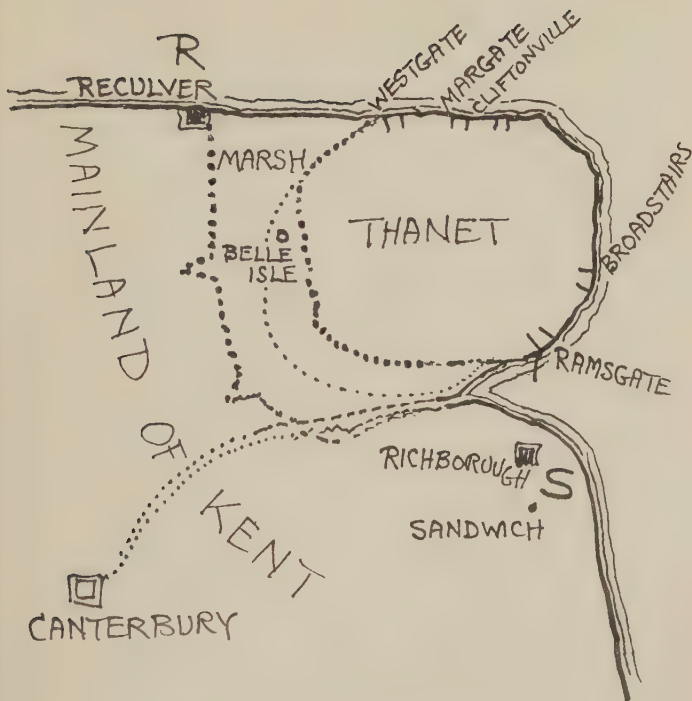


FIG. 2

MAP OF THE COAST OF THANET AND MAINLAND, NOW JOINED IN A CONTINUOUS SHORE FROM R TO S, EXCEPT WHERE PIERCED BY THE STOUR BETWEEN RAMSGATE AND RICHBOROUGH

the battering of the sea. In these cliffs there will probably be breaks and inlets where the chalk is softer than the general average.

At the other side of the island, however, at the portion E F, the sea will have an entirely different effect. The tides rushing in and out will carry a certain amount of the deposit from the base of the wearing cliffs, and there will be a silt of sand and chalk making shallows. It is clear that R G H S will be the deep side of the estuary and that E F, in the shelter of the island will be the shallow side.

Thus we see that before we study a piece of landscape where at one time an island like this stood out from the mainland, we begin by assuming probabilities, and, like the pilot with the aircraft, we know what to look for.

The Isle of Thanet was once an island in fact, but the whole of the estuary between it and the mainland of Kent is now grassland, through which runs a negligible stream and a few ditches. Shall we find clues in these pastures that encourage us and tell us that we are reading the story aright ?

Yes, we shall. The names on the sea side are of cliffs and gates, " gate " being a word for a passage or entrance, only in late centuries being narrowed down to mean a hinged door. As the

island became populated with farmers and fishermen, they naturally planted their settlements at the gaps that led down from the land to the sea. With the exception of Birchington and Pegwell, all the places on this edge of the island tell of cliffs or ways down to the sea, but not one indicates a shallow, island, or ford. We find Westgate, Margate, Cliftonville, Kingsgate,¹ Broadstairs, and Ramsgate. On the other side of the island, however, we find no names with "gate" in them, but there is Belle Isle on the marsh where we have conjectured shoals and shallows to be. There is St. Nicholas-at-Wade standing above the shallowest crossing from Thanet to the mainland. We find also confirmation of the idea that R G H will be the deep side of the channel, for although it is now shrunk and become meadowland, the remaining water in the small dyke we have seen is named still North Stream, and is no doubt the old ship channel past the shallows, as is South Stream in the Goodwins to-day.

And now for our first clue. We know what to look for. As we stand on the marsh at G in the diagram, by the side of North Stream, we

¹ Kingsgate is a comparatively new name. The name "king" was bestowed on this "gate" to commemorate the landing of Charles II at the Restoration. It was previously known as St. Bartholomew.

peer across towards the slightly rising ground of Thanet. If our reasoning has been right, we may expect to see something between E and F that is a relic of the days when this strip was the shallow side of an arm of the sea. It was, we have imagined, full of shoals and islands.

There is a farm on the level to the left of the upraised St. Nicholas-at-Wade. It is like any other farm in these parts. Judging by the view through a field-glass it promises to be worth visiting. A reference to the map, however, is necessary to get the full significance of our find. It is not its appearance but its name that excites us. It is situated in grassland over two miles from the sea. It stands on the spot of our first imaginary island in the shallows at E in our diagram.

And the name of the farm is Belle Isle.

* * * *

One day when at Sarre, I decided on a further inquiry concerning Belle Isle in detail, and the many islands which we have conjectured must have been in the shallows of the shores of Thanet. I made my way alone as far as St. Nicholas-at-Wade. The church, with its great tower of flint and stone, is a magnificent object in the

village landscape, and I was tempted to stay there, but the urgency of the clue of the island farm led me on. Through the old farm-buildings of St. Nicholas Court I found a rutty road across the fields. This led down to the marsh, and I could see a group of trees and some buildings about half a mile to the west at the bottom of the slope.

This proved to be a very new-looking house with a brightly varnished front door, built of yellow brick and with a slate roof, not at all the ancient farm-house that I had expected to see. An enclosed garden surrounded it, and a fringe of plum-trees. Beyond it were some large and uncut willows, several gnarled and old walnut-trees, and beyond these, along the old shore in the direction of the sea, a group of elms.

A great barking of dogs greeted me, but I could see nobody. A cursory examination of the house and farm-sheds adjoining convinced me that this modern cottage had not been here long and that it had replaced an old building. The walnut-trees could not have been less than two centuries old. The present level of the marsh (see p. 25) at the west side of this spot is eight feet above normal sea-level, so if we could imagine the sea-wall at Reculver to be

removed, we should find the water at a high spring tide something like ten feet deep. When this marsh was sea there must have been a good twenty feet of water at this spot.

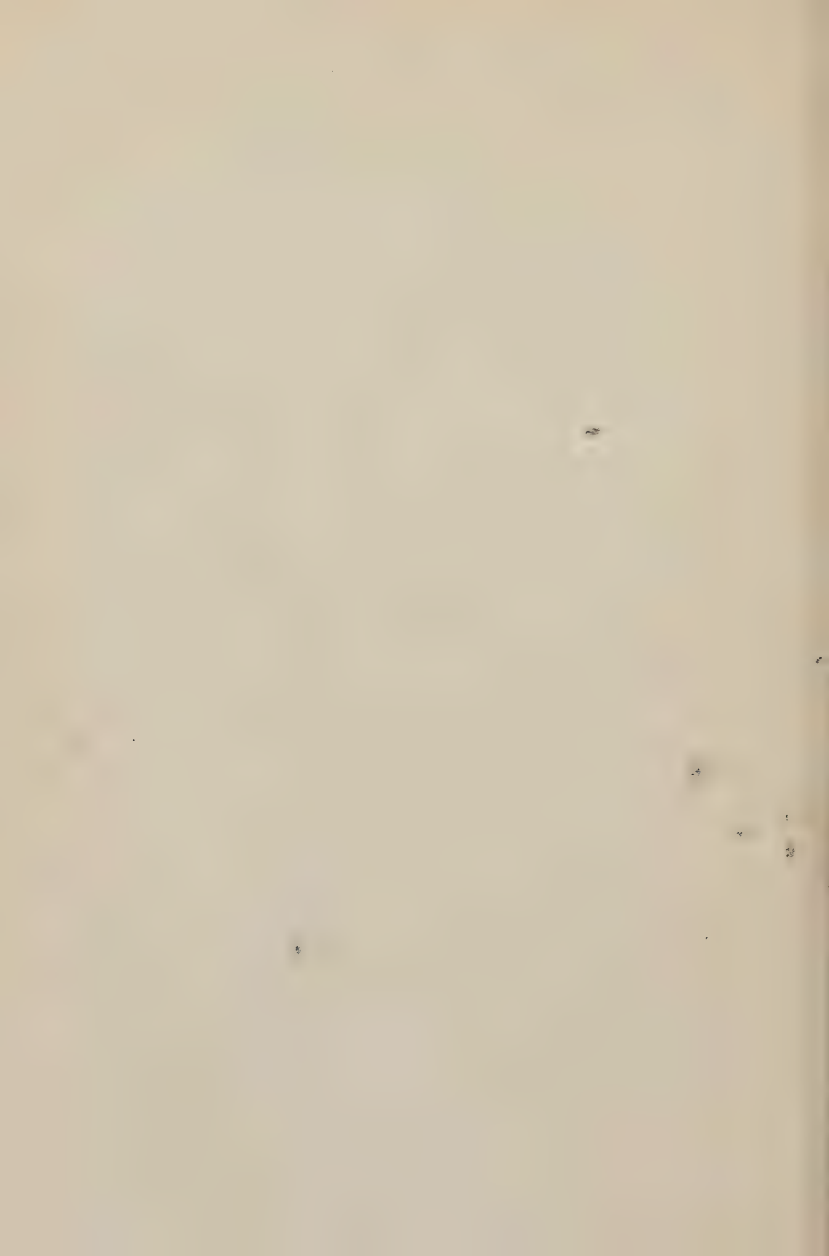
I could not tell whether or not the old house stood on the site of the present house, or whether upon the piece of land on which the walnut-trees flourish ; a place that must obviously have been an island. The house to-day would seem to stand rather upon a little peninsula nearly surrounded by water than upon an actual island. It would probably be an island at high spring tide, or it may be that the level has been raised and the trench filled in on the Thanet side of the house.

At this stage of my study of the place I was joined by two friendly dogs, little more than puppies, who attached themselves to me and followed me wherever I went. There was evidently no one at home and they were delighted to find a friend. I struck out across a grass walk which is marked on the Ordnance Survey map as Snake Drove. It is one of the recognized marsh roads for driving cattle. Without a knowledge of these tracks, a stranger will not get very far, for the constant dykes intercept his passage, and it is only upon their course that he can be certain of a bridge.



Donald Maxwell

BELLE ISLE, ST. NICHOLAS-AT-WADE



At a distance of about half a mile along this drove I came to a strange bit of country. It is a section of the old trench of the Wantsum Channel. I followed this in a northward direction, and being now a few feet lower than the rest of the marsh, found myself in the Switzerland of the Wantsum Marsh. The sky-line was cut by mountainous heights, here and there covered with bushes and small trees. True, their topmost summits were not more than twenty feet above me, but in the country of the blind the one-eyed is king. It is a delightful spot, and I sat down in this strange green land to enjoy the landscape. In the distance I could see the twin towers of Reculver, and beyond and above me I knew would be the sea.

These miniature hills, of which there are about a dozen, were, of course, once islands in the shallows under the lee of Thanet, bearing out our theory of the shoals as indicated in our diagram at Fig. 1.

If you want a new sort of place for a picnic, which in the nature of things cannot be crowded by motorists, go down to Belle Isle. If you go there by car you can leave it in the field at the side of the track, or you can, if you will, drive along the grass way of Snake Drove, taking care to shut the gates as you go or you will be doing

no service to the farmers of the neighbourhood.

As soon as I had eaten my alfresco lunch and arisen refreshed to explore still farther, I saw in the distance, across the waters of the Wantsum (see map), and still upon the Snake Drove, a black object drawing nearer. It proved to be a farm-cart. My two companions, the dogs, set up yelps of delight, and I guessed that this approaching vehicle—it seemed like a caravan coming over the desert—contained the inhabitants of Belle Isle.

I was right. A sturdy horse was trudging along, and the cart creaked and rumbled in a suppressed way over the grassy surface. A man was driving—the owner of Belle Isle—and he was accompanied by his wife and two lasses of the marsh.

I apologized for the dogs, and explained that my absconding with these animals was involuntary.

We talked for some time, and I found the farmer delighted that I had made a drawing of his house and farm “to be put in a book.” No one had ever been to look at his house before, from the point of view of holiday sightseeing.

I tried a long shot.

“Where are the stones of the old buildings?” I asked.

“Under the plum-trees at the back. They are not far down, and I used to come across them when digging.”

I said good-bye to this jolly company of marsh folk and went on my way rejoicing. Our guesses had not, after all, been so very un-intelligent.

The old farm must have stood on an island indeed. It overlooked the estuary where it was dotted with islands and was well called by the name of Belle Isle.

I have met people who hold the theory that these mounds, which we have proved were once islands, were in reality made by man. In the Isle of Sheppey there are a great many mounds on the marshy shores of the Swale, and these, likewise, have been spoken of as burial-places for Danes, or artificially made refuges for cattle during a high tide.

It is, of course, possible that some of the smaller bumps are the result of the labours of man. The digging of ditches to drain the land might account for a few mounds and the burial of corpses after sanguinary encounters with Danish pirates might possibly be the origin of a single mound here and there. However, I cannot remember any case where bones have been found and the great size of many of

these marsh mounds makes the theory quite untenable.

There would not be enough Danes in the world to account for these barrows. Some are so large, some of these by Belle Isle, for instance, as to make any theory of earthwork construction ridiculous.

There are two explanations only that can explain the making of enormous earth mounds by human labour. These are the motives of religion or military necessity. No other theory is adequate to explain thousands of men digging and piling up millions of tons of earth.

On Salisbury Plain and in many parts of England are great mounds, raised, it is thought by some, for religious uses by primitive peoples. The rest of the great earthworks, such as the Wansdyke and the Devil's Dyke, were made obviously for military defence against enemies, although the mists of history hide any certain knowledge of the identity of the races defending or attacking.

We may safely dismiss the theory that these large hillocks upon the marsh at St. Nicholas-at-Wade are other than islands in the old estuary of the Wantsum.

II

THE CLUE OF THE LITTLE BRICK BRIDGES

II

THE CLUE OF THE LITTLE BRICK BRIDGES

BEFORE we go any farther on our cruise we must study the chart. The rough sketch-map shown on page 33 is not sufficient as a guide, but it will furnish a list of things to look for as we proceed on our inland voyage. Some people seem unable to appreciate the glamour and romance of a map. To any student of place-names, and to any close observer of contours and levels, there is a whole history open at a glance.

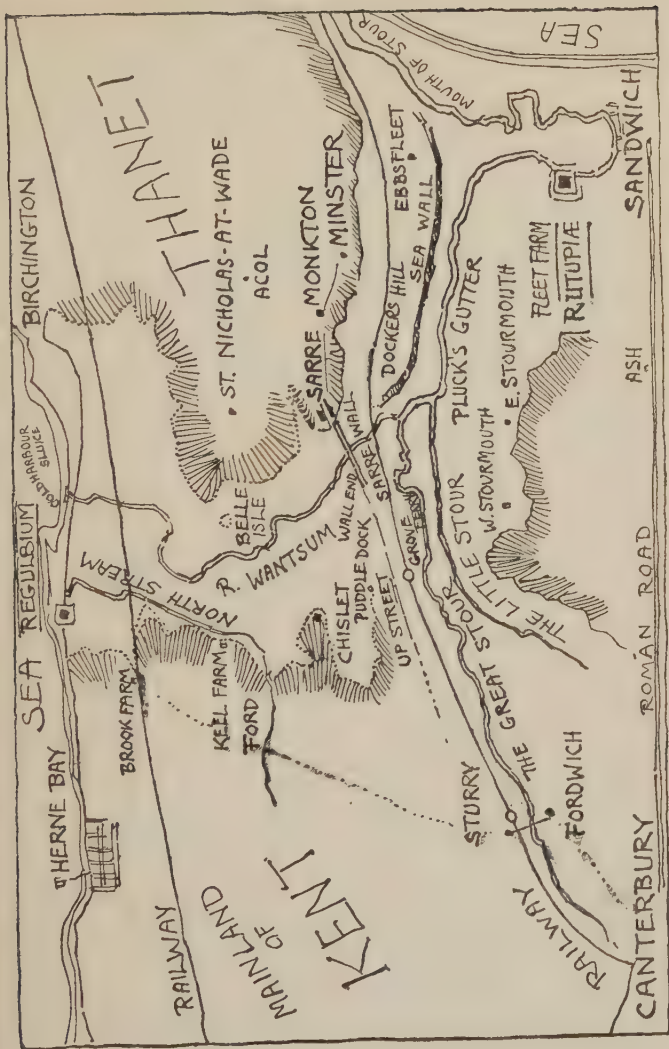
Maps suffer from having too much on them, because they have to serve for so many different purposes. This sketch-map has been kept intentionally scant in its information. I have put down only the places connected with our particular research. The shaded portion shows the rise of the shores from the marsh. It might be described as the contour of the old sea-coast,

and represents now roughly the edge of the fifty-foot level above sea water.

Now let us look at the whole thing in historical perspective. In Roman times Regulbium and Rutupiæ—to-day, Reculver and Richborough—were the two fortresses at the two openings of the broad estuary that divided the Isle of Thanet from the mainland. This estuary was then called the Rutupian Channel.

Let us first look for communications on land. We should expect to find three roads from Canterbury: to Regulbium, to the Isle of Thanet, and to Rutupiæ respectively. So we draw three lines to represent roughly these expected routes. A line drawn from Sturry to Regulbium will cross a little river, now the upper end of the water called North Stream. There we find the name Ford (M in Fig. 1), so we are probably right as to this road. The second line, aiming straight for Thanet, along the dry land at the north of the Stour, passes over rising ground at Upstreet (K in Fig. 1) to Sarre by means of a causeway, which to-day is called Sarre Wall, and which was evidently a made way over the estuary at low water.

The third line, from Canterbury to Sandwich and Rutupiæ, is marked as a Roman road upon



SKETCH-MAP OF THE ESTUARY FORMERLY SEPARATING THE ISLE OF THANET FROM THE MAINLAND

the Ordnance Survey map, and there can be no doubt about it.

In Saxon times the waterway began to silt up, and, although a navigable tidal channel, was noted for its shallows, and became known as the Wantsume, which name, without its final "e," this little dyke-stream at Sarre still bears. A story is told by some writer on Kent—I forget now who it was, so cannot acknowledge it—to the effect that some Americans seemed hugely amused at this ditch being labelled seriously, River Wantsum, on a signboard by the bridge. They guessed it was what the English call a river! Why, in the States, etc. etc.

The American tourist is sometimes very well informed concerning our old-world corners, but these were evidently globe-trotters of the crudest type, for which the better kind of American must ever be blushing.

This river is "liquid history," to borrow a phrase from John Burns. The galleys of Imperial Rome have passed to and fro upon this waterway at Sarre. These still dykes are the lineal descendants of seas that were furrowed by the beaked ships of the Vikings from the fierce North. Kings of Kent have built their palaces upon these shores, and Kings of England have reviewed their fleets upon these waters.

Americans may be able to prove that their rivers have more water in them than have ours. Let them drink it. We will glory in our infirmities, and, although England may have gone dry as far as the Wantsum is concerned, we are still a land of the free.

It seems that the holiday trippers' joke that this must be a piece of water that wants some is not very wide of the mark. The Venerable Bede, at least, is a respectable associate in backing this meaning.

Possibly the name is adjectival, Wantsume Water, and has become a substantive, the Wantsum. A life that knows joy is gladsome, and water that is wanting in depth is wantsume.

I visited this delightful region of the North Stream many times, and at last went down there again with an artist friend to make the drawing which is reproduced on page 39. The bridges presented some clue to our inquiries, and started building up theories as to the history of this part of the marsh.

The shore of the North Stream looks like a beach. I should imagine as the marsh silted up and became dry land this must have been for a long time a fleet or tidal waterway. There is no reason now why barns and farm-buildings and cottages should not stand on the marsh

level, but buildings generally succeed each other, clinging to the same spot. Until comparatively recently access to the marsh across the stream must have been difficult. At first no doubt there would be wooden bridges over which cattle could be driven. When these were succeeded by the present bridges is not apparent. The brickwork looks like that of the eighteenth century.

The general appearance of this canal, with its little brick bridges, seems so overpoweringly suggestive of a shore that I conjectured a reconstruction of the place. "Imagine," I said to my artist friend, "that all this was cleared away. Can you not see a beach something like Deal beach, with boats drawn up on the shore or loading with produce at that farm?"

My friend seemed a bit sceptical, and said my ability to make pictures ran away with me. However, I did finally score, for I asked a shepherd passing by to tell me the name of the place that seemed so much like a beach.

"Keel Farm, sir."

That was a discovery. A keel is an old English name for a boat. In the Humber and some parts of the East Coast certain boats are still called keels. Later I went to see the owner of the farm, who told me that he had no explanation of the name to give. It had been Keel

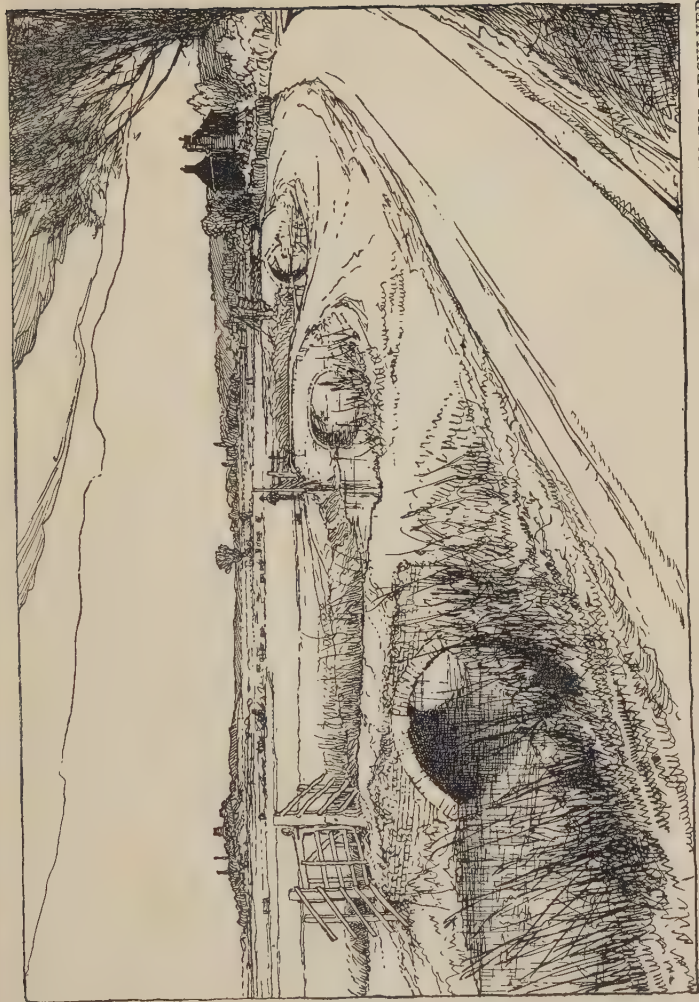
Farm for some three hundred years. He supposed a man named Keel built it. That is all I could find out. So we will leave the origin of the name to be unravelled by some future explorer. It is certainly a curious coincidence.

The North Stream takes a turn just south of Keel Farm. I should imagine that this turn represents the old mouth of the stream where it falls into the estuary of the Wantsum.

And here I must digress and tell you a ghost story, or something very nearly a ghost story. I give it for what it is worth. I do not attempt to offer any explanation, psychical or otherwise. I do not assume that in these difficult times of Prayer Book Revision the spirit of an Archbishop of Canterbury would be seen at the place where he penned a part at least of the Thirty-nine Articles. Nor do I assume that at Ford, where stood a palace in which Cranmer entertained Henry VIII, there would be local atmosphere of psychic import.

If these things are too high for me, I can at least sketch you the old brick walls of a house that looks as if it is haunted, and give you a glimpse of it from the tangled weeds that grow where once spread the pleasant grounds about an episcopal palace.

As for archæology, I can find that a few



NORTH STREAM BY RECVLVER

fragments only of old flint wall at Ford remain of the palace itself, but Ford Manor and Ford House are successors to it. Ford House, one aspect of which is reproduced on page 45, has been rebuilt with a Georgian front, but the sides of it, by a lane where stood a Tudor brick arch, only recently demolished, are undoubtedly of ancient date, and seem to have been part of buildings there in Cranmer's time.

The arch, I understand, was accidentally destroyed. A farm-cart, heavily laden, stuck in the gateway, and, in the efforts to free it, damage was done to the ancient brickwork, part of which fell down. Finally, the structure was demolished for safety's sake.

We had left Keel Farm, and turning to the right, over the water where it crosses the road at the Gate Inn, we followed it by means of a road for some distance and then took a footpath, because the road climbs to the left and leaves the hollow. Finally, we came out at Ford, at the back of the farm by two oast-kilns and many stacks.

All that we knew about Ford, when we started on this ramble, was that it had once been the site of an episcopal palace and that Cranmer had lived there. Archbishop Parker had sought to pull it down, but Queen Elizabeth would not

allow this. In later centuries it fell into decay, and shared the fate of many ruined buildings, inasmuch as it became a stone-quarry for various local uses.

The road from Fordwich to Reculver crosses here by a brick bridge, which is evidently the successor of the successor of the ford which gives this place its name. Red-brick houses stand on either side of the road. The one on the east side, Ford Manor, is only a hundred years or so in age, but some of the doors look as if they had been adapted from doors in the old palace.

Beside the few fragments of flint walls we have noticed there is a barn of some antiquity, possibly a relic of the original farm.

There is a thatched building at the back, visible in the sketch on page 44, and beyond this to the left and in line with the old house are sheds in the last stage of infirmity and neglect. An ancient barn is propped up to keep it from falling into the road, and there are decrepit and tumble-down cowsheds and out-buildings at the back of the house.

And what of the house? A haunted place, with sightless windows through which can be seen dark hangings that have once been blinds. The door cannot have been opened for half a

century. A ghostly stillness broods over the place, and no living being can be seen.

As I draw I cannot but recall Tennyson's picture of the moated grange of Mariana :

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd ;
The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,

.

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted one and all ;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.

The broken sheds look'd sad and strange ;
Uplifted was the clinking latch ;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

Beyond the tangled thicket of thistles and docks a little plank bridge leads over the stream to a field in which is a ruined oast-house. By the time I had completed my sketch of this place the sun had set, and when we had finished an exploration of the valley higher up twilight was upon us.

On our way back we met a ploughman homeward plodding his weary way ; quite up to date, however, for he was wont to plough with

a tractor. Well-informed about this place, he gave us some interesting facts concerning its tradition and history. When he saw my sketch, he made some joke about drawing, not only the house, but its resident also.

"You don't mean to tell me," I inquired, "that anybody lives there? It is all shut up, bolted and barred, and looks like a haunted manor."

"Well, sir, some do say that there is something queer about it. But somebody lives there. There's no doubt about that. Sometimes he's seen and sometimes he isn't. He is an old man.

"There's all sorts o' stories, sir, and I can't say myself that I believe them all. Some say that he is a lawyer, and that a great lawsuit has put this estate into Chancery, and that as long as he is in possession of it they can't do anything about it. Another story is that the house was all got ready for a great marriage-feast, and the bride disappeared on the eve of the wedding, and that everything's all laid out, sir, cake an' all, and never been touched since. But, bless you, sir, no one knows if it is true, because no one here has ever been inside to see."

This information, and the mystery of it all, made us go back to the weird house at Ford.



FORD HOUSE

There was still enough light to see the old mansion and the ruinous barns and the overgrown courtyard at the back. We stood under the trees in silence, gazing at the house.

And then a strange thing happened. A light appeared at one of the windows and a door at the back opened, and slowly and silently an old man came down to the stream by the little plank bridge. He walked up to us, looked at us, and then, without a word, returned into the house, which was instantly plunged in darkness.

Let us now return to Fig. 1 (page 14) and obtain another glimpse of the obvious. There is always bound to be an important town or settlement at the tidal limit of shipping. Such a place is X, which can also represent Canterbury. Now, when the Romans came they found X already a settlement, and they fortified it and made it the great centre of eastern Kent.

At each entrance to the estuary that surrounds the island we should expect them to build strong forts at R and S. We should also expect a road with a tidal causeway to Thanet at T. We therefore draw lines X R and X S to connect these forts with the capital, and X T to connect Thanet with the mainland. The

road X T passes over a bump at K, and the road X R passes over a stream at M. This is the brook that runs into North Stream by Keel Farm.

And then by comparing this diagram with the map we find confirmation that our conjectures are right. X S is the road from Canterbury to Richborough. It is marked as a Roman road on the Ordnance Survey map. X T is the Roman street to Thanet. Where it passes over the bump K it is called Upstreet.

The road X R is the road to Regulbium. Where it crosses the stream at M is Ford. I think our clues are working and we are beginning to see something of the nature of this country and its many changes.

III

THE CLUE OF THE PHANTOM SHIPYARD

III

THE CLUE OF THE PHANTOM SHIPYARD

HAD we not docked our imaginary ship at Keel Farm we might have done so with advantage at Upstreet, for before the sun had been risen many minutes I had come to Chislet, rounding the headland, and crossed the little bay which lies to the south of it.

This bay is now pleasant field-land, through the midst of which runs Sarre Penn, a narrow water-channel contained by high banks. Hence the name " penn " for a stream. The water is penned or pent. From Upstreet, where the land rises again, is a good view of Chislet Headland, crowned by its church, with curious blunt-topped tower.

Now let us see what we can learn from the names at this point, the narrows, before the channel broadens again towards Sandwich. Sarre is the half-way port, and once a notable

place of shipping. In old documents this place is called Ville de Serre, and Serre applies to the waterway at this part. The name Sarre was ultimately transferred to the town. It has generally been held that this is a survival of the Latin for saw, the point of the land at Thanet being supposed on a map to look like a saw dividing the waters.

I think, however, that it is highly improbable that any name would be derived from a map-like appearance of anything. The name long preceded maps. It seems to me more likely that the word "sewer" was applied to this relatively narrow waterway. In other parts of Kent—Romney Marsh, for example—we find Reading Sewer and other sewers. The waterway that severs two lands and drains them is called a "sever" or sewer. It is often that a dividing ditch is called a sewer. The fact that this was often convenient for carrying away refuse gives it a later meaning. Thus it is just possible that sewer has become Serre, and Ville de Serre is finally contracted to Sarre. To this day Sarre Wall is the entry to the Isle of Thanet, and carries the road. I should think, however, in Roman times this wall was merely a causeway, only passable at low water, and that it in no way impeded the tide or the passage of ships.

The importance of Sarre grew until the fourteenth century, after which it began to silt up and decay. An attempt to improve things was made, when it is probable that this causeway was built upon and a good road made along it. Thus Sarre, in spite of shipping losses, was brought into better communication with Canterbury. The effect, however, on navigation was drastic. The waterway, as an ordinary channel of communication between Sandwich and the northern waters at Reculver, was closed. There were now two approaches to Sarre, but vessels from the northern waters would have to make their way to Canterbury right round Thanet, and not as they had been able to in the old days.

We should, therefore, be led to expect a landing-place or quay as near as possible to the road at Upstreet. Now, some vessels could no doubt still unload at Sarre on the northern side of the wall, but there is a bay of comparatively deep water running east to west at Chislet, and this would afford an approach to Canterbury, with only five miles of road.

Thus, if our reasoning has been at all sound, we know where to look, and when I tell you that I discovered a lost dockyard on the southern fringe of Upstreet, you will not be surprised. Where the land begins to rise a little from the

marsh level, about a mile west of Sarre, we find a place called Wall End, and, a little farther to the west, we come to two cottages in a hollow that look out to a reedy tributary of Sarre Penn, and find with a thrill that it rejoices in the name of Puddle Dock.

There it lay, as I have sketched it opposite, with the Roman street running just above the cottage roofs. A field that stands some twenty feet higher than the marsh on the right has been excavated to make a steep side or quay. On the left is a dyke filled with reeds.

The slanting light of the morning casting the shadows of small willows across this little cutting made it seem more than ever likely to have been a place of ships. Here was a green ghost of other days—days when this little dock rang with the noise of hammers, a morning phantasy that brought to my mind some lines from Longfellow in “The Building of the Ship”:

And long the level shadows lay,
As if they, too, the beams would be
Of some great airy argosy.

Here was a shipyard, a phantom shipyard of the lost Wantsum.

There are many features in Sarre difficult to read. The land spread out at the foot of the



PUDDLE DOCK, UPSTREET

upland of Thanet is like one of those old documents that bear writing upon writing. Owing to shortage of parchment, one manuscript is written over another that has been imperfectly obliterated. In this document of grassland, however, in spite of much obscurity, there is one fact easily decipherable. Sarre is a harbour. For quays we have green banks. For ships we have sheep, and for a lighthouse dominating the port we see from afar the black stump of a windmill.

One name makes me wonder and hazard guesses. Why is the road that leads from Sarre into the centre of Thanet called Gore Street, and why is Birchington in old maps written as Gore End? Gore Street does not lead to Birchington. This name is an old one, Gore Street, or we should be tempted to explain it as an allusion to the frequency of bad motor accidents at Sarre Corner. The Danes sacked Sarre, burnt it, and put its inhabitants to the sword in the ninth century; but that sort of thing was common, and if the word "gore" had the meaning here of blood we should expect to find it occurring all over the map.

The name may possibly have some connection with a cut or slash. A bull is said to gore a man when he cuts him open with his horns. A dress

is gored when it is slashed for a piece to be inserted. Thus the gore may be the cut or division between the lands of Thanet and the mainland of Kent, which in olden times was often referred to by the islanders as "The Continent." If this derivation be possible, the two names fit. Gore Street would be the section of the Thanet road that leads down to the cut, and Gore End at Birchington is so called because the cut here joins the sea and the higher chalk land begins.

I have received a great many letters upon this subject of the name Gore and find that I am on the right track but not accurate in associating the gore with a cut. The gore, in dressmaking, is the triangular insertion put into the cut. When a dress is gored it is cut and a piece put in. I am not an authority on dressmaking, but take the statement as correct.

Thus the wedge-shaped insertion of the sea or marshland into a piece of rising country might be a gore, and Gore Street would be the street that rises from the gore. Then the name Gore End at Birchington would fit. It is at the point where the marshland finishes at the wide exit to the sea.

In this voyage of discovery on the lost waters of the Wantsum I should like as far as possible

to steer not so much by knowledge of the existing charts as by the dead reckoning of landscape observation and nautical place-name clues. I have sometimes made valuable finds on account of this unlettered hunger for good things when the rich in archæology have been sent empty away.

During the last few weeks the road into Thanet, through Sarre, has been a continuous procession of massed traffic, to and fro, between the mainland of Kent and the island. Few holiday-makers in this roaring procession give a thought to Sarre, unless it be to learn the fact that this old seaport is noted for cherry brandy. Yet it bore no small part in the foundations of England's naval strength.

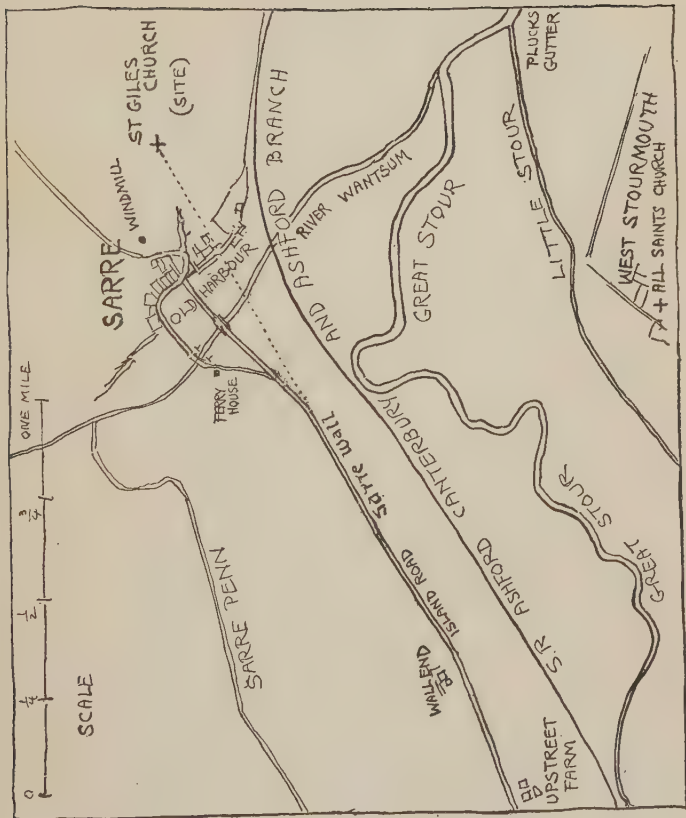
Sarre was a limb of the Cinque Ports through Sandwich, its head. When war was threatened, these limbs worked furiously. Deal was Sandwich's chief member, but Fordwich, Walmer, Ramsgate, and Stoner gathered men and material, and even distant Brightlingsea in Essex helped to form the quota demanded of their parent port.

Let me fit together the few facts that we know about Sarre and verify them on the spot. As we travel from Upstreet, passing Puddle Dock, which lies down on our left, and a little

place called Wall End, also on our left, we proceed down a long, straight road bordered with trees. The railway on our right runs parallel to it. We are on Sarre Wall. A few hundred yards before we enter Sarre we come to a brick bridge. This is only about a hundred years old, and replaces, I should imagine, an older wooden one that bridged a sluice-gap in the wall when that wall was built up high and took the place of the low causeway of ancient times. Let us say, at a guess, that this wall was built up in about the middle of the sixteenth century, when Sandwich became a centre for the refugees from the Low Countries, and when a great number of like works were undertaken by Dutch and Flemish engineers.

The coach-road, however, that entered Sarre a little farther to the north is a deflection of this straight line. It was the highway into the town. It still exists as a ghost-road, and the old brick bridge is visible from the highway of to-day, forsaken and forgotten. I am sketching it here (page 69), and, as I draw, the noise of motor traffic behind me echoes faintly from it, as of phantom coaches passing invisible.

Although we think of Sarre as an important place in the Middle Ages, and a limb of the Cinque Ports, it is certain, from evidence of



SCALE-MAP OF ENTRANCE TO SARRE

things dug up, that it was a notable settlement of Jutish origin. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered by Mr. John Brent in 1862. Some graves were by the windmill and some in the chalk pit. Swords, spears, keys, counters and dice, gold ornaments and beads, as well as domestic pottery, are among the traces of Saxon days that have been now found and exhibited in various museums.

When Archbishop Parker visited Sandwich in 1563 he found the Dutch refugee settlers "very godly on the Sabbath Day and busy at their work on week-days. Profitable and gentle strangers who ought to be welcomed and not grudged." They settled in various outlying places—some at Sarre—and introduced woollen, linen and silk weaving. A later relic of this influence of the Low Countries is to be seen in the beautiful old house on the left as we enter Sarre. The Flemish gable is unmistakable. It bears the date 1691.

Little is left to-day of buildings of early date. They were probably all of wood, and have long since disappeared. The Crown is old, Lamb's Cottage, the Flemish gabled building we have just noticed, and there is an Elizabethan house. The Elms, in parts much modernized. Sarre Court is Georgian. Of churches there are none.

A local historian, Lewis, writing in 1735, tells us of the site of one, but even in his time there was no trace of a building :

“ Upon the hill, to the eastward of the town, thirty rods, on the left-hand of the great road leading from Serre to Monckton . . . stood the parish church.”

So that is Sarre ; a ghostly port that dreams of ships and looks out across a league of grass to seek the fickle sea.

IV

THE CLUE OF THE RIGHT-ANGLED
TURN

IV THE CLUE OF THE RIGHT-ANGLED TURN

THERE is sure to be a point in a tidal river that is bound to develop into a settlement and a town, and that is the point at which the tide ends. A seagoing ship can get up no farther on the tide. There will be landing-stages and bridges, and a division is made between seagoing craft and barges and boats for shallow water above the tides. Such a place was Canterbury, and when the Romans came they made it their great central fortress of East Kent.

If you will turn to Fig. 1 you will see the position of Canterbury in the diagram. Now, the Island of Thanet, surrounded as it is by the sea, will have to be defended. A fort at each entrance of the estuary will be necessary, and this will of course be placed on the land side for the sake of easier communication. We shall expect three roads. We have already seen

how these go. Another reference to this diagram on page 14 will be advisable, because these "streets" of the old Roman civilization are all-important in the development of the landscape and the disposition and nature of village settlements of long ago. The Canterbury-Richborough is the most easily traced of these three roads.

The second is not so clear, but we can trace it by following our conjectural diagram. The line drawn from Canterbury to Thanet reaches Sarre and St. Nicholas-at-Wade. The "wade" is probably the shallowest and easiest place to wade across. The street becomes a causeway at last, well built and giving a firm road. We find a section of our line called Sarre Wall, and where this causeway leaves the marsh and touches the higher ground on the Canterbury side we find a few buildings, and they are called Wall End Farm. Our conjectured street passes over a bump, and if we are coming from Thanet we find the street is going up. What, then, will be the most obvious name for this bit of road—Up Street, of course !

And then take the third of our conjectured roads—the one from Canterbury to Regulbium. There is little trace of it left, and how are we to prove the reasonableness of our deduction as



THE OLD BRIDGE AT SARRE

to the probability of its being indeed a Roman road? By names on the map. They will be our best evidence.

The line that joins Canterbury to Reculver passes over a stream. The village at this point is named Ford. Now Ford is not given to a place because a few people can get across a brook at a certain spot. It is where a road crosses, and so we can take it that our diagram is really telling us what to look for.

Let us, therefore, with this preliminary gymnastic exercise to our deductive faculties, go to Sarre by means of this Roman street and see what fresh observations we can make at Sarre.

Let us imagine that we go back a few years, to the time before the new road was cut through the village, and let us imagine, also, that we are somewhat reckless motorists, and finding a long, smooth, and straight road where Upstreet goes down, we scorch. It is a foolish thing to do, but in this case I want to emphasize a point in an interesting problem. Our licences cannot be endorsed for imaginary driving to the danger of the public.

We arrive at Sarre at full speed, and it is only because we have good brakes that we avoid a smash. We have shot into a street which

is at right angles to our entering road. Who on earth planned a town in such a mad way?

The answer is that no one planned Sarre in a mad way. We might as well drive at fifty miles an hour off Herne Bay Pier or Deal and find ourselves going into houses and shops.

The sea-front and quays of Sarre face south-west, and we have been driving bang into them at right angles. This is the clue of the right-angled turn. A benevolent Road Board, or some other body, has recently constructed a new road, cutting through and avoiding this sudden turn, and made things easier for motorists ignorant of Sarre's mediæval town-planning.

There is no church at Sarre, as we have seen, and the site is mentioned as being to the left of the road to Monkton. I had not found it, however, and made an interesting experiment.

In a tidal crossing, such as was the causeway of Sarre Wall, before it was built up, there would be some beacon or light necessary to guide travellers. It would be reasonable therefore to expect a conspicuous landmark of some sort to be placed on the high ground of Sarre as a leading mark.

I soon obtained a large-scale sheet of the

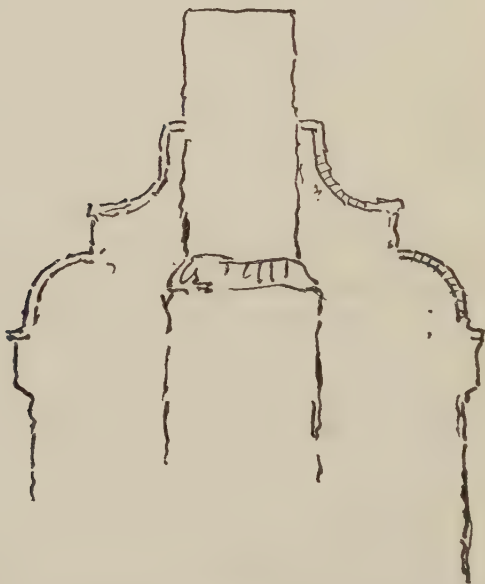
Ordnance Survey map and ruled a line along the portion of road marked in old type as Sarre Wall. This would be beyond doubt the track of the original causeway. The result was almost magical. The line went off the present road a little to the right, passed to the right of Sarre Court, and then at a point in the hill fifty feet above the marsh level went through the cross on the map marking "St. Giles Church (site of)." Evidently when Ville de Sarre was a place of importance the church tower was a beacon for the road as well as a landmark for ships.

When you next go to Sarre enter it by the old road, which is a lane branching out from the present road from Upstreet on the left-hand side, about a quarter of a mile from the bridge over the Wantsum. This lane passes a cottage just before the old bridge, and this cottage is marked Ferry House.

After crossing the old bridge the road bears round to the right. There is Bolingbroke, a delightful old house of the Elizabethan period, and then a house called Pocock with a modern front, but very old. We are now on the quay. Venerable cottages succeed each other, facing what was once the sea.

I should imagine that the quays of Sarre

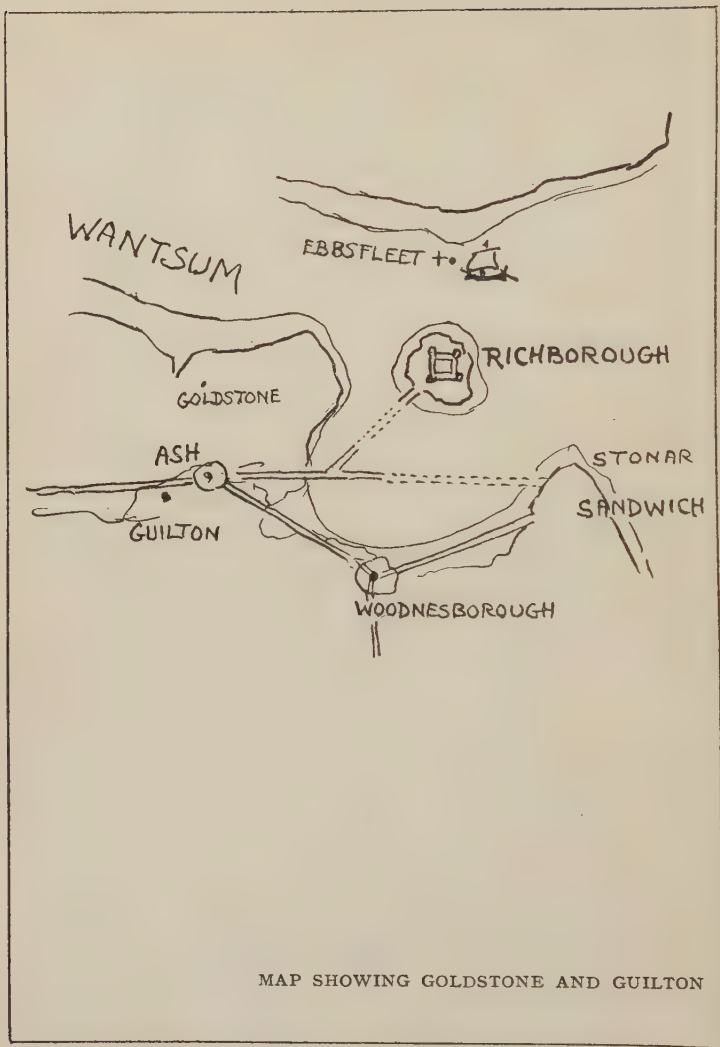
lay between Bolingbroke at one end and Sarre Court at the other. I have marked the map at this point Old Harbour, and I think you will agree that this surmise can be justified.



GABLE IN FLEMISH STYLE AT WOODNESBOROUGH

V

THE CLUE OF THE GOLDEN IMAGE



V

THE CLUE OF THE GOLDEN IMAGE

IT is fitting that we should find a treasure at the end of our voyage of discovery on the Wantsum. It is fitting, also, that those who have sailed with me on these lost waters should be the first to share in the treasure. I know where there is a golden image three feet high and ten inches broad. It is buried on the shores of our lost river, in the parish of Ash, and some clue to its position is given in the sketch on page 89.

Ash, seen from afar across the marshes on account of its tall spire, is now many miles from the sea, but in Roman and Saxon times it was nearly surrounded by the sea, a tongue of land leading down to the waters which separated it from the Rutupian island, where still stand the walls of the great Roman fortress of Richborough.

There is still a nautical flavour about Ash. The church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the

patron saint of sailors, towers over the Ship Inn. A view from its lofty tower will show you Deal, Sandwich, and the cliffs of Thanet where they fall away to Pegwell Bay. Had you been on that hill with a telescope in the year 597 you could have seen a small ship landing in Ebbsfleet with forty-one passengers, strangers from Rome.

Judging from the evidence of place-names and what we know of the religion of the heathen Saxons, the various high places visible from Ash would have been the places of temples. The hill of Woodnesborough, where now stands a church with a square tower crowned by a leaden cupola, was a place sacred to Wodin. The mound on which this stood was the burrow or borough, hence the name Wodin's borough. The old name for Woodnesborough Street was Friday Street, no doubt a processional way sacred to Friga, the goddess wife of Wodin.

The ridge of Gilton, a continuation of Ash, was likewise a high place, or sacred grove, and the site of a temple, and there are many who think that the high crown of land on which stands Ash Church was also a place of heathen worship.

On page 85 is a rough map of the position of the various places at the eastern entrance of the Wantsum Channel at the time of the landing



Thomas Agnew & Sons

EBBSFLEET

of St. Augustine in 597. Richborough was still an island. Stoner was a town a little to the north of Sandwich. Ash and Gilton were upon a promontory about seventy feet in height, and Woodnesborough rose out of the water, like a miniature St. Michael's Mount, joined to the mainland by the ridge some forty feet above the marsh. This ridge carried the Roman road to Dover.

The Romans had been in occupation only about 170 years before, so we can assume that the roads, causeways, bridges, harbours, and other works were almost intact, save for such deliberate alterations as the Saxons had made.

The hill of Woodnesborough was crowned—the name suggests—with a temple of Wodin, and Gilton was evidently another sacred spot and is an acknowledged site of a Saxon burying ground, but whether of this period or not I do not know. The name Goldstone is found as the description of a farm north of Ash, and I have often wondered whether it got this from some tradition that it was the hiding-place of the golden image.

It is possible that the priests of Wodin could have stood upon the summit of their temple tower and watched the ship grounding at Ebbsfleet, the ship of St. Augustine that boded

no good to their vested interests. The distance is actually four miles, so we can imagine that all the local priests and wise men were present at the great mission sermon preached under a tree before King Ethelbert and his court. They saw in the "new theology" something that would conquer, and they determined to hide the treasures of their shrines.

We can easily imagine that some of the priests would conform to the religion of the winning side, and it was this nominal adherence that was at first a weakness to the Church. The fact that this part of the new mission field did partially relapse into heathen ways is not to be regarded as strange when we consider the number of adherents who will join any cause merely to follow the fashion.

The traditional landing-place of the Saxons who first came as mercenaries at the invitation of a British king was at Ebbsfleet, and so the spot is doubly historic to all Englishmen. I have made a sketch of the old sea coast at Ebbsfleet on page 79. It is now pasture-land, here and there enriched with glades of trees.

To stand upon high ground and overlook any part of this country is not to be reminded alone of the Romans or the Saxons. What we can see tells us a good deal of friendly intercourse



WOODNESBOROUGH CHURCH

with the people of the Netherlands, of the Flemish workers, and the Walloons. Weaving and the making of linen were arts to a large extent taught us by foreign settlers. If you

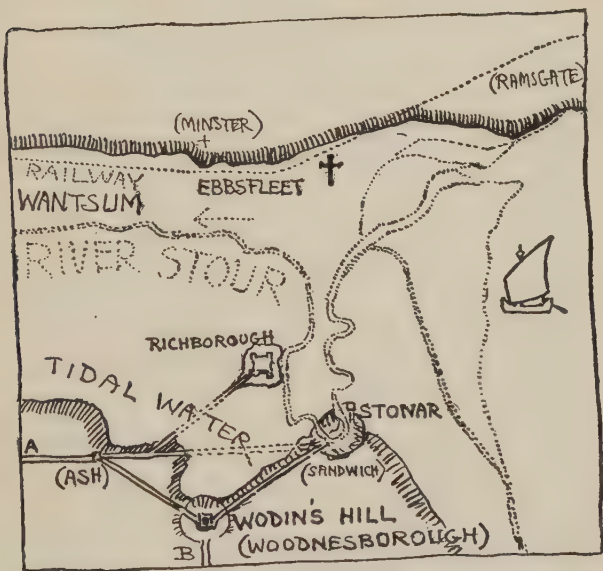


DIAGRAM OF THE OLD SEA-COAST AT EBBSFLEET

wander in and out these villages, or look upon the broad landscape, you will not escape many a sight reminiscent of the Low Countries. The Flemish gable, the brick architecture of many

an old house, and the embanked and dyked land are foreign in appearance. There are names that tell us much. Two farms, Great Poulders and Little Poulders, bear Dutch names, for



DUTCH OR FLEMISH INFLUENCE IS SHOWN BY THE NAMES NORTH POULDERS AND SOUTH POULDERS. POLDER IS A LOW COUNTRY WORD FOR A FIELD RECLAIMED FROM THE SEA

polder is a Dutch word for a reclaimed piece of land below sea-level. There is also a place called Flemings about a mile south of Ash.

A walk through Sandwich yields very many

sights reminiscent of the Low Countries, and the cupola top of a church tower in Sandwich, and also of the church at Woodnesborough, are, in my fancy, somewhat Dutch in their quaintness.

The advent of the Danes, who used Sandwich as a winter base and shelter for their ships, made no permanent impression upon the landscape. Only by names can we deduce their unwelcome attentions. Upon the coast alone had the Danes ever any strong hold on Kent. Wic, of course, is a common ending of both Norse and Saxon names.

There is a distinction, however. In some names wic is "a shelter" for men. In other names a "shelter" for ships. The word ford, too, occurs in some form in both languages. To the Saxons a ford was a place where we could "go." To the Danes a fjord was a place where ships could "go." Thus, Sandwich is the sand-bank shelter (for ships) and Fordwich is the sheltered fjord or channel for sailors.

The priests of Wodin were present when St. Augustine appeared before King Ethelbert. They no doubt smiled at the temerity of one who would introduce a faith able to overthrow the old religion of their fathers. But it was soon apparent that Christianity would get the upper hand. The temples of Wodin would be

despoiled and turned into churches. So, rather than this should happen, the priests of the old religion determined to thwart the triumphant progress of Christianity by hiding the treasures of their temples, and there is a tradition to the effect that at Guilton the golden image of Wodin was buried before the temple was destroyed.

I heard of this story in the course of a chance conversation with a labourer. Losing no time, and eager to discover the image, I found a place called Each End—Each, I think, is another form of Ash—and hastened to Guilton. At the top of the ridge that rises from the stream on the south of Ash, the Little Stour, I discovered the High Place. That was evidently the very spot, and there, as large as life, a mysterious octagonal building, black and sinister, no doubt the temple of Wodin. Hard by, an old man was digging, so there was a rival in the field. Without disclosing my purpose in visiting this place, I opened up a conversation with him, and he became most communicative.

“That building, sir, that’s a bit of an old windmill. I use it for a shed for storing apples and potatoes. A good, windy place, too, as I knows.”

We talked of crops. We talked of antiquities. He told me that at a certain place



A TEMPLE OF WODIN ?

between Ash and Richborough Castle the road sounded hollow, and he judged that there was some sort of a stone causeway below the ground. Then he came out with a bombshell: "They do say, sir, that there is a golden calf buried somewhere in Gilton, but I've never found it."

This was evidently our golden image. We were quite warm. The idea that it was a golden calf instead of a figure of Wodin is no doubt a bit of local colour to make it seem a little more scriptural. Many people have dug for the golden image at Gilton. A hundred years ago a landowner sold some fields to a purchaser, who had to agree, in true legal form, that his title to them was without prejudice to the finding of the golden image, which, if found, would still belong to the seller. In digging for it, many valuable things of Roman and Saxon workmanship have been found. But there is no clue as to where in Gilton it is buried, and Gilton, from the point of view of excavation, is a large place.

I think, however, I can tell you where it is. The priests of Wodin were cute fellows. They knew that the story of the image being hidden would get about. So what did they do? They left it where it was, dropped it down a little below the surface, and perhaps it is now twenty

feet down. So that is where I think it is. Right underneath the ruins of the old windmill at Gilton, about twenty feet deep.

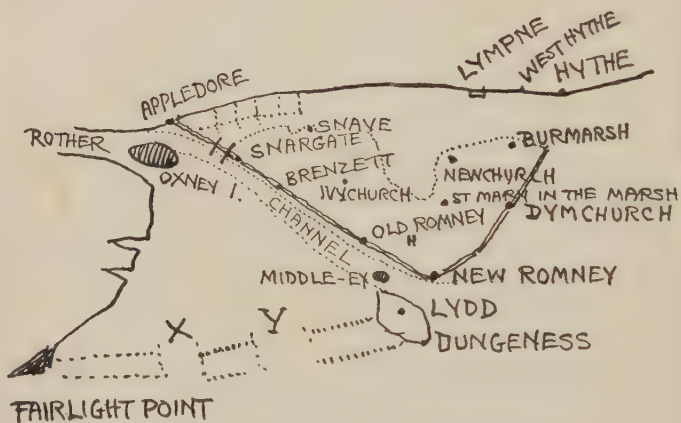
People often laugh at village traditions. They laughed at the story that in a certain mound near Colchester was a golden table. But the story was true in the main. The mound was opened and a bronze table found, among other things. The tradition was probably derived from the account of an eye-witness who saw it put in. Possibly, therefore, this story of the golden statue of Wodin may one day be verified.



LITTLE POULDERS FARM

VI

THE CLUE OF THE FIFTH QUARTER



A SKETCH-MAP SHOWING THE CONJECTURED
FORMATION OF ROMNEY MARSH

VI

THE CLUE OF THE FIFTH QUARTER

THE amateur motor expert who took a car to pieces and reassembled it with great satisfaction, finding that as well as making a good show *he had several pieces over*, could not have been more disappointed at the failure of the engine than were the old-time geographers at the daring speculations of the creator of the *Ingoldsby Legends*.

The world had been all discovered and catalogued. It had been conveniently divided into two hemispheres. There were zones arctic, temperate, and tropical. There were five continents. Every one was quite satisfied with the world as it was, and the whole thing, land and sea, continent and island, was spoken of in good all-round terms as the four quarters of the globe.

Then comes one, Thomas Ingoldsby, a man of parts, but some would say hypercritical of the geography of his time. He was one of these

restless spirits like Einstein who upset long-settled traditions. He made statements as wild as those of Galileo centuries before. He backed theories that were self-evidently absurd. The schoolboy who proclaimed that parallel straight lines will never meet *unless you bend them a little* found a supporter in Einstein, who, I understand, proved that in the case of rays of light there was something in the theory.

Thomas Ingoldsby takes this cherished tradition about there being four quarters of the globe, and announces with confidence that the expression is all wrong. He has discovered a fifth quarter!

And that quarter is Romney Marsh.

Here, then, is a clue for us. There is many a true word spoken in jest. Thomas Ingoldsby was as right as right, for all the laughter of pedagogues. Perhaps not quite in the sense he meant, but right for all that. The four quarters of the globe had all been settled, land and sea, mountain and river, and then comes another tract of country that did not exist before. If Julius Cæsar had supplied maps with his Commentaries he could not have shown Romney Marsh, or only in an unsatisfactory manner, like a photograph of some celebrity in the morning paper "marked with a cross," and in no



GEORGE W. W. W. W.

ROMNEY MARSH FROM LYPNE CHURCHYARD

wise to be distinguished from a hundred other smudges.

Thus, A to H on Fig. 3, and A to F represent the shores of the sea-coast at that time. Into this high ground the River Rother had cut its way, leaving in the midst of its mouth a small hill of land now known as Oxney Island. The crown of this island is some two hundred feet above sea-level, so we must assume that the Rother cut its way out to the sea by channels on either side of this hill. In the diagram I have shaded in the island at O.

The result of this double mouth of the Rother, one on each side of Oxney, was that one channel was formed, along the shore from A to H, which is from Appledore to Hythe. This, I think, must have been the larger of the two mouths and less encumbered with silt and banks at Hythe. We must not miss the obvious, so we will notice in passing on that "y" or "ey" means island and that hithe is a wharf or landing-stage for ships. Oxney is now six miles from the sea at its nearest point, and West Hythe is now a mile and a half from salt water. In the tower of the church at Stone, in Oxney, there is a stone on which is a carving representing an ox or oxen.¹ A passer-by told me about it.

¹I have not seen it owing to the church being locked when I was there in broad daylight in summer.

This is thought to be a sacrificial stone and part of a Roman altar. It may be that in the pre-Christian days of the Roman occupation this hill of Oxney was one of the "High Places," such as those of which we read in the Bible, and connected with heathen sacrifice. If so, Oxen Island may have had a superstitious significance

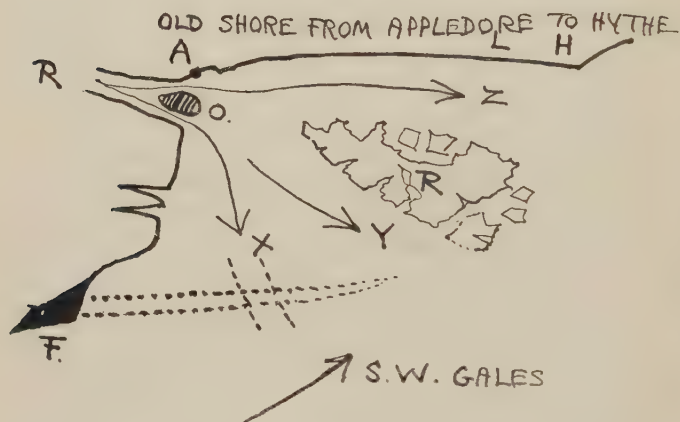


FIG. 3

once, and the oxen that gave the name to it were the carved monsters that impressed the imagination of our rude forefathers who named it.

The other mouth or mouths of the Rother must have been at X and Y. These were more likely to be choked with shingle from the crumbling cliffs of Fairlight. The great gales

come from the south-west, so that we can assume that the sea hammering at the rock of this shore would gradually form immense banks of small pieces which would be ground down into pebbles. The combination of gales with certain tides made what is called the "eastward drift" of this shingle.

We must assume that the Rother would bring

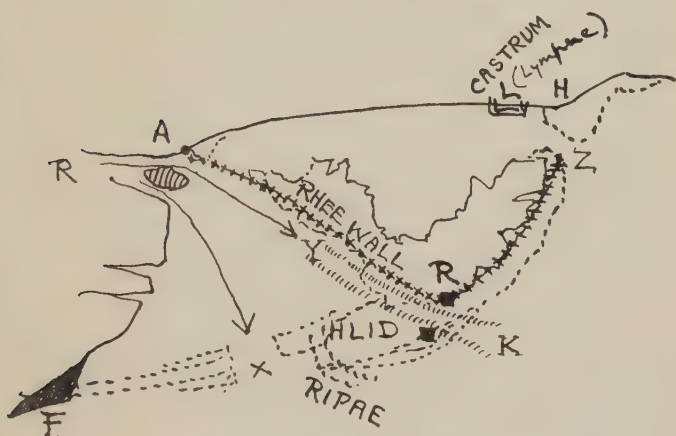


FIG. 4

down a large amount of clay and earth and deposit this in its mouth in the form of banks. Gradually a marshy island would be formed, and I have marked at R what I think we can safely imagine would be its position. The ancient British word for a marsh is "ruimne" (possibly pronounced room). With "y" or "ey"

tacked on for island we at last get "ruimney" and Romney,¹ the marsh island.

At the same time as the formation of this earth-bank the formation of a single bank proceeded apace. At first the principal bank of shingle would be at the base of F, stretching in diminishing proportions towards X and Y. Through this the inrush and outrush of tidal water of the Rother's second mouth would find channels.

In Fig. 4 we imagine a later stage of the mud island and shingle drift. The eastward drift has continued to spread shingle from F to H. This bank is pierced at X and Z by the mouths of the Rother. The mud island has arrested a mass of it and it is piled up at Hlid.²

I imagine that when the Romans came they found an almost continuous belt of shingle, pierced at X and at Z, and resting upon the marsh island.

The island may have been a summer abode

¹ Another ingenious explanation, inasmuch as the "inning" of Romney Marsh was a work attributed to the Romans, is that the name is from Roman-ey. Place-names, however, are of a gregarious nature, and if this derivation were sound, we should expect to find a great many other places given by the prefix Roman, but we do not find such names.

² Hlith is a Saxon word that means a slope. The present name, Lydd, is derived from it, as well as many other names, as Lydden. We must not forget, too, that this slope gives the name Lyddite to an explosive which was first used here.



LYMPNE FROM THE MARSH AT DYMCHURCH

for fishermen. The deep water channel at Z formed convenient shelter from the south-west gales, and this was just the spot for a fortress and harbour.

Thus we find in course of time a great fortress and naval base at Portus Lemanis (now Lympne) and the northern branch of the Rother's mouth was called the Limen. We do not know with any certainty even in which century the Romans "inned Romney Marsh." Some think that this work had already been begun by the Britons. The name of the wall, the Rhee Wall, is certainly British. Isaac Taylor says: "The root Rhe or Rhin is connected with the Gaelic *rea*, rapid; with the Welsh *rhe*, swift; *rhedu*, to run; *rhin*, that which runs: and also with the Greek *ῥέω*, the Sanskrit *ri*, and the English words *run* and *rain*. [The *raindeer* is the running deer]."

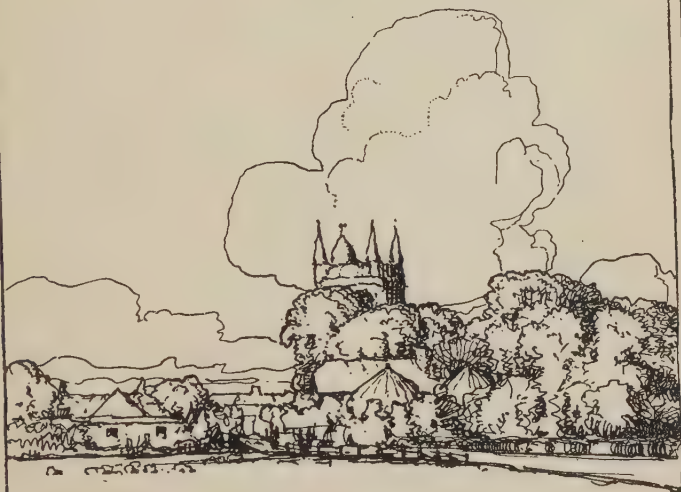
We find the Rae in Shropshire and the Rhee in Cambridgeshire and the Rhae in Staffordshire, so that we can safely assume that the Rhee Wall is the water wall or tide wall, i.e. the wall for resisting the tide or sea.

The generally accepted theory of the evolution of Romney Marsh has been that the Romans built the Rhee Wall and began "inning" the land. Recently, however, that assumption has

been gravely doubted. Dr. William Cock of Appledore, who has been a life-long student of the Marsh and a weighty authority on its history, has written that he considers this date too early and that it was more likely to have been after the Norman Conquest. One of his reasons for this rejection of the Roman origin of the Rhee Wall is that no traces of Roman work have been found on the marsh except some pottery near Dymchurch, which he accounts for as brick-works and pottery works at the mouth of the old river Limen which flowed out at this point. Burrows, another authority, writes, however, that it is certain that the marsh was under cultivation in Roman times.

Now what are we detectives to do, when great authorities disagree? There is only one sound action—examine the evidence again and if we can find a clue as to who built the Rhee Wall, look for an adequate motive to explain such a great work.

Now, first of all, let us look for a motive. It is very doubtful, if at so early a period as this period of the Roman occupation, land would be “made” with great labour. There was plenty of uncultivated land, and the work of clearing forests would be less than the labour of embanking marshes. We must look for a



D.M.

NEW ROMNEY

better motive for constructing the Rhee Wall than the acquiring of more land.

The Roman naval port of Lympne was one of the latest of the four great naval stations of Kent, Rutupiae (Richborough), Regulbium (Reculver), Dubris (Dover), and Portus Lemanis (Lympne).

Now, of these we notice that Richborough is an island and Reculver, if not actually an island, a peninsula. Both gave good shelter for ships. Dover, however, was more exposed, although the Roman harbour lay up the river. It would be a difficult and narrow entrance to negotiate in a south-west gale.

Of all places along this shore of Kent was one that would make an ideal naval port, and it is not surprising that this was added to the existing naval bases. The marsh island at the mouth of the Rother gave shelter in a south-west gale, and a galley could lie with safety off Lympne. There was deep water right up to the shore.

We know that the Romans were very thorough in making their ports efficient. Traces of light-houses, and even signal stations, have been found. The first thing that would occur to a good sailor who had taken advantage of the natural breakwater of Romney Island would be

to strengthen the defence. No doubt when a very high spring tide coincided with a strong south-west wind the bank would be covered and Lympne to some extent exposed.

I have imagined, therefore, that it would be at least an intelligent guess to assume the Roman engineers, with British labour, to have built up the breakwater of the Rhee Wall at the Romney end of what is now the marsh. The fact that Rhee is a Celtic word strengthens our supposition. From what we know of the early Saxons, it is unlikely that they would have undertaken a work of this kind, yet by 771 Romney has become an important harbour. Why?

My own reading of the riddle is that this Romney end of the Rhee Wall, which I think must have been a work of a composite kind, added to and lengthened in various periods, affected the tides. The various islands of the marsh, intersected by channels, would prove a somewhat indefinite obstacle to the tides. Channels would be running all over the place, the principal ones, however, being the north channel that came out at Hythe, one at Romney, and one or more west of Lydd.

Assuming, therefore, that the Rhee Wall was built from New Romney to Old Romney and

on to Brenzett, thus making an intersected shore into a straight line, the outflowing Rother would be directed into a definite and straight channel at this part. The northern exit would still exist, but we should imagine this new and directed mouth would become sluiced out to the detriment of the other which would slowly silt up.

Not only does Romney become an important harbour, but in 893 we find a great Danish fleet sailing up to Appledore by this channel and not by the one at Hythe.

The fact that no Roman traces of this work exist, if we assume our reading to be a true one, is not surprising. An earthwork cannot easily be dated. The quays, beacons, posts, and navigation marks would be almost certainly of wood.

Thus we are led to assume that the probabilities are in favour of the theory that the first part of the Rhee Wall was constructed at the Romney end by the Romans ; that this affected the channels and solidified the islands of the marsh, till there was one island, the tail of it being at Brenzett, probably with a low-tide causeway across from the mainland at Appledore or Warehorn, and that the Romney channel took most of the water to the detriment of the northern channel which began to silt up.

In a little sketch map at the end of Chapter

VII, I have indicated what I imagine must have been the state of things in the years 700 to 800. This is the tail of the island at Brenzett. We shall see in the next chapter that the examination of the names on the map at this point will possibly throw some light on the problem.

It is interesting to imagine a Roman navigation chart, if such a thing existed, would mark the banks (RIPAE) as dangerous at this point. Whether this be so or not, it is significant that this western edge of the shingle marsh of Lydd is to this day named West Rype.

After the Romans left and the Saxons had for some centuries possessed Romney Marsh, we shall find the old fortress of Lympne more and more forsaken by the sea, although there would still be deep water in places. West Hythe is getting high and dry and the wharves and landing-stages to the east by nearly a mile are developed to its detriment. There are lurid stories to the effect that the inhabitants of West Hythe were wiped out by a Danish pirate raid, and one enthusiast for this theory told me that, of the vast number of skulls to be seen in the crypt of Hythe Church, all are women and children, old men and imbeciles. His inference was that the fighting men were away—presumably looking for the Danes—when these

raiders arrived in great force, putting to the sword every human being they could find. The remains of this exterminated population were at a later date put into the crypt of Hythe Church, where they can now be seen. I am not anatomist enough to tell you whether the skulls are, indeed, those of women, children, old men and imbeciles. Asking a prominent official connected with the ancient town of Hythe, he looked at me with something very like a wink, and said that the story had never been officially disproved, as it brought many tourists to the place, and was no small asset to the sightseeing wonders of the Cinque Ports.

The sketch on page 105 shows Lympne as it appears across the marshes from Dymchurch Wall. At the top of the hill can be seen the Church of Lympne and the Castle, and near the base such fragments of wall of the Roman Castrum as remain to-day. The camp was evidently of the same rectangular type as Richborough, with one side forming a quay for the galleys.

Judging from the name Midley, between New Romney and Lydd, and a little to the west, there must have been an island in the channel, which would have been called Middle-Ey, hence the name. There is a ruin here which

is part of a church. We thus close the first chapter of the evolution of Romney Marsh under the Saxons. The Danes have come into the picture, for Dungeness has been interpreted "Danes' isle headland." No doubt these pirates



A RUIN NEAR HORSEBONES FARM
ON "THE MIDDLE ISLAND" (MIDLEY)

found the shingle island of Lydd a good shelter for their raiding activities.

There is a most interesting and valuable source of information in Dr. F. W. Hardman's paper, "The Danes in Kent." It is a survey of Kentish place-names of Scandinavian origin.

These two derivations of places in and about Romney Marsh are among Dr. Hardman's findings :

Brynsete (1292), O.N. *brvnnr*, a spring, and *saetr*, a shieling.

Warehorn (830 as Werahorna), from *ver* and *horn*, the station at the angle, nook or corner.

I am inclined to think, however, that the name Warehorn can hardly be Norse in spite of any possible etymological possibilities. These are outweighed by other considerations.

We find the name in documentary evidence of 820. Now at this time no doubt Danish pirates had visited and plundered many places, but a name given by these foreigners would imply some period of settlement. Freeman, in dividing the Danish invasions into three periods, gives 787 to 855 as a period of simple plunder. "They land, they harry the country, they fight if need be to secure their booty, but whether defeated or victorious, they equally return to their ships and sail away with what they have gathered." From 855 to 897 was a period of settlement. It is to these years that we must look for the naming of settlements by the Danes. But 820, when we first find the name, was too

early to come into the settlement period. Another possible origin of the name Warehorn we shall examine later on.

When the Normans came they must have found a ship channel that ran along the south of Rhee Wall with an opening into the sea between Lydd and New Romney. No doubt, too, there were tidal openings through the shingle bank at X and Y.

Thus, at the Conquest the fifth quarter of the globe was in being, although by no means in the form we know it now.



A RUIN NEAR NEWCHURCH

VII

THE CLUE OF THE MARSHLAND
NAMES

VII

THE CLUE OF THE MARSHLAND NAMES

AT one time I thought that the name Appledore told of a time when the orchards of that delightful corner of Kent came down to the waters of the sea, and that the place owed its name to apples and to the Celtic *dwr*, water. However, although the explanation fits the case, and many places like Appleby and Applethwaite have connexion with orchards and many other places ending in dore owe their last syllable to the proximity (at one time) to water, I have begun to suspect that I have been mistaken. No doubt Appledore *was* a place of orchards going down to the waters of a tidal estuary. But at the Conquest we find the name is spelt Apuldre and Apeldres, and some one has said that the name is connected not with apples but with the reclaiming of the marsh. A "polder" is a walled-in piece of new land below the level of the sea, and is a word that comes from the

Low Countries. If At-polder could become Apuldre and thence Appledore, all will be well with this theory. Certain it is that Appledore was a place adjoining "inned" lands in Saxon times, and the Domesday surveyors may have thus adapted the name.

This derivation of Appledore was given by Holloway in his *History of Romney Marsh*. I am told by those much more competent than I am to judge of etymological matters that it is most improbable. Whether the word polder, which is from the Low Countries, could have been used in Saxon times is doubtful. Near Sandwich are two regions of marsh named North Polders and South Polders respectively, but it is likely that these reclamations were named by Dutch settlers in Sandwich (see Chapter V).

However, the very fact that such a theory of the meaning of the name Appledore exists is in itself evidence to us. The innings of some bits of marsh were made in early Saxon times, and the at-polder derivation, although possibly fanciful, would probably not have been made had there not been polders where settlers could be "at."

The next place along the wall gives us another clue to the progress of this reclaiming of the



EARLY MORNING AT OLD ROMNEY

marsh. A great channel of water had been deflected, and when that is done all sorts of trouble may arise in the draining of a large area. The name Snargate at the place where one would expect difficulties in draining the old channel is significant. The water must be sluiced or "snared" at this point or we shall be flooded. I am entirely floored by the name Snave. No doubt we shall soon get light from the Place-Name Society. At present I am inclined to think that Snargate and Snave must have been ancient Saxon comedians appearing in a music-hall turn when the world was young.

Ivychurch is a catch for place-name amateurs. I am convinced it is not so named because some ivy grew up a church. A village is often quite a large one before there is a church at all, and ivy will not grow over a church enough to make it a conspicuous mark for a long time. If they called it Ivychurch because the church was covered with ivy, what was it called previously? It was once written Ive-church and "ive" means a watery place or swamp, so I think we can safely dispose of this ivy.

Old Romney was not distinguished from New Romney until the sixteenth century. The usual explanation that New Romney was a substitute for Old Romney, owing to the latter being

forsaken by the sea, is contested in some quarters on the ground that the church of New Romney is older than that of Old Romney. However, there must be some reason for the distinction, and it seems probable that at first the whole place was called Romney, both the island and the settlements. It is natural that the end that was opposite Lydd at the mouth and probably with deeper water would develop rather at the expense of the end further up the estuary. It gets called New Romney as the go-ahead place, and by contrast Old Romney is used to describe the smaller township. The exact age of the two churches is not necessarily a deciding factor. It may be that Old Romney had a wooden church that was pulled down and rebuilt at a later date than the building of St. Nicholas, New Romney.

There is a ruined church that I have drawn on page 127, and it stands midway between Old Romney and New Romney, and about half a mile north of a line drawn from one to the other. A local tradition exists to the effect that this is the oldest building in the island. I am not sufficient of an architect to verify this, though there are large fragments left from which we could judge. However, if the theory is correct, and it is even older than either Old Romney or

New Romney, might we not assume possibly that this was a parent church which served both places? We are only guessing. No doubt in a later edition of this book I shall have obtained exact knowledge on this and many other points.

The name of this ruin is in itself very interesting: Hope All Saints.¹ There is a Hope Farm not



THE RUIN AT HOPE ALL SAINTS

far away. What does the name Hope stand for? Now, whether or not there were villages at all the places on the map at the time of the building of this church of All Saints does not matter. They show where the land was firm and a little

¹ I have heard of an almost comic derivation of this name, Hope All Saints, that is worthy of record for its very absurdity. Some one has said that after dreadful slaughters and inroads of pirates the people of Romney Marsh almost despaired of enjoying peace and the fruits of their labour. They built a church with the dedication All Saints in hope that they would be protected by heaven. Thus Hope All Saints was their watchword.

higher than the rest of the marsh, so that villages sooner or later could be built upon their sites. These villages stand in two groups, Brenzett, Snargate, Snave, and Ivychurch is one group. Dymchurch, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh, Newchurch, and Burmarsh is the other. Between them is a loop of marsh full of small dykes and water-courses. This loop must have been part of the tidal "sea" of Lympne. Such a formation, a bay of water almost surrounded by hills or land, was known as a hope. The name occurs constantly and the Lower Hope below Gravesend is the most easily remembered example. Thus the Hope would be the name of this inlet and the church of All Saints at the head of the Hope still tells us by its name that our conjectural map is being built up on right lines.

The ruin of the old church of St. Mary's at West Hythe (visible in the sketch on p. 99, to the right of the second tree trunk) tells us why St. Mary's-in-the-Marsh is so distinguished. Newchurch may be the more up-to-date end of a straggling place by the water's edge and superseding the old church at Eastbridge, a fragment of the tower of which I have sketched at end of Chapter VI.

Burmarsh for a long time was a name that puzzled me. Why should a place on the earth

part (not the shingle part) of the marsh be specially named? If "bur" is from the Saxon "burh," a word that occurs so often in barrow, bury, bourgh, Burham, etc., why should it be especially used as a name for one village? All the towns on Romney Marsh proper (not on the shingle marsh of Dungeness or the shingle fringe of Littlestone) are on earth, and yet "bur" or "bury" does not occur anywhere else. I supposed that if "bur" occurs in the name it would not be in the sense of a hill or of a borough. It might be some special soil that distinguishes this as the *earth* marsh. So strongly was I obsessed with this idea that I went over there on a hot Sunday afternoon. Not one soul was visible in the village. The church was open and I went in, but at about two p.m. no one seemed to be visible in the neighbourhood of the church, an old building that would seat about one hundred people all told.

At last I found an inhabitant asleep under a tree. He awoke to ask me if I was looking for anybody, and eventually did all he could to elucidate the mystery of the name Burmarsh.

"You ought to have a word with old Mr. Poddlestack; he's the oldest inhabitant, and a fair dictionary of Burmarsh. I'll fetch him out."

Mr. Poddlestack was fetched, and we talked amicably upon things in general, the great increase in the price of bacon, the folly of those new-fangled aeroplanes, and the degeneracy of travellers who travel in charabancs instead of walking as their fathers did. Then I steered for subjects connected with the soil :

"Not much good for making bricks," Mr. Poddlestack affirmed. "There is some white clay, and I can remember an old brickfield over against West Hythe. It's a pond now."

I thanked the oldest inhabitant for his interesting reminiscences and went in high glee to see the ruined brickfield. My guess had been right. No doubt this end of the marsh island ran to a clay that was useful. Now that other and better clays could compete the industry had languished, but when Romney Marsh was an island, a local brick and pottery industry, however rough, had been a valuable possession.

Now let us put a searchlight on the names of other places—Brenzett and Warehorn, which latter is on the mainland at the border of the marsh. Brenzett, it seems, was once an island separated from the Romney island by a tidal channel. The ridge of this island might have been called just the ridge "bryn" at the time

when the other island was called "ruimne." I know "bryn" usually refers to a hill, but in marshland it might be used relatively, as in the case of a farm on flat land by Ham Street, named Mountain Farm. There are Brinton and Brancaster in Norfolk. When this tail-island was settled, and became a "set," as Dorset and Somerset, it would be called Brynset, which is almost exactly the form of the word (p. 117) Brynsete (1292).

We will look again at Snargate, remembering that it was probably at the tail end of the Brenzett island, and when the Rhee Wall was extended thither would be joined to Brenzett and the Romneys and be the point near a low-tide crossing to the mainland.

Snargate is thought by Dr. Hardman to be of Danish origin—O.N. "snarr," quick, and gate, a way. This because Snargate was at the very end of the island and the low-tide track across to Appledore or Warehorn, and thus the "short way" to or from the mainland. I think, if Dr. Hardman would look at this name again, more as a surveyor than as an etymologist, he would perhaps be willing to consider the plain Saxon meaning as in Snargate Street, Dover, the street of the Sluice Gate. A place or settlement at a weir, where the water was snared or

sluiced, seems a likely derivation, according to the tidal facts, if not according to possible Danish derivation.

Dr. Hardman also assumes that Warehorn means the station at the angle or corner. I know little enough of etymology, but may I hazard a guess that here the word is from "weir," as in Ware, Wareham—i.e., the headland of the weir or enclosed water. It seems probable that a low-tide way would exist, in this neighbourhood of Snargate. I shall be told that this road is of recent origin, but we must remember that surveyors take advantage of even a foot or so of elevation in a marsh, and the present road would be run upon the firmest ground to be found. The Royal Military Canal has obliterated much.

The names, Snargate and Warehorn, both fit very well if in, say, the year A.D. 800, a ridge in the marsh was made into a track for crossing at ebb tide. The low promontory reaching up from it might well be called the weir-horn, and a sluice in the southern part, where the island begins, the snare-gate. Warehorn is mentioned by name as Werahorna in a Saxon document of 820, so it would be early for a Danish settlement.

The sketch opposite is made from a point on the road to Snargate, and the dense mass of



WAREHORN

trees, above which the church appears, is caused by the Royal Military Canal, which, in its tunnel of foliage, cuts through here on its way from Hythe to Rye.

There remains now the name Dymchurch to be unravelled. I have never come across any satisfactory solution of its derivation. The wildly amateur assumptions that the church is a long way off as seen from the mainland by Hythe, and thus dim, or that it is so enshrouded in trees that worshippers cannot see their prayer-books, may be dismissed with a smile, but it must be confessed that there are at present no explanations that are much more lucid. The fact that a part of Dymchurch is called Dunkirk is interesting. Can DUN, written in old letters, DVN, have become corrupted to DYM? If the Downs off Deal are so called because of dunes (sands), can the sands here have made Dune-Church?

The old people of the marsh still call Dymchurch Dime-church with a long "i." Now the English word "dime," a certain coin, is derived from the Latin "decimus." A friend of mine hazarded the guess that Dymchurch was at the tenth mile along the wall from Appledore. The fact that the Roman mile was shorter than the English mile upset the theory, ingenious as this

was. The Norman-French dime is a tenth and is used to-day in France for tithe, which fact may give light.

The great date in the history of Romney is 1287, in the reign of Edward I. In this year a great storm caused enormous havoc, making such changes in the shingle bank that the ship channel along the Rhee Wall was choked up and a new outlet for the River Rother formed at X. Thus began a new chapter in the chequered history of Romney Marsh.



VIII
THE CLUE OF THREE AND
FOURPENCE

VIII

THE CLUE OF THREE AND FOURPENCE

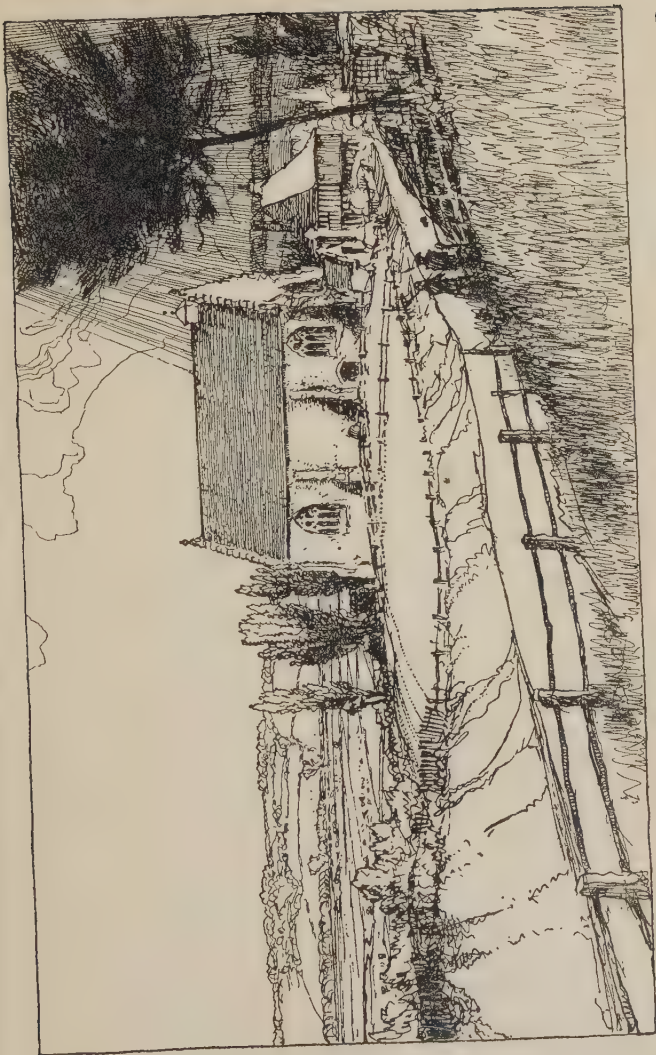
A TRAVELLER upon the road from Tenterden to Rye, when he comes down from the relatively high land of Tenterden to the flat meadows some two miles upon the way, will see ahead of him a hill, which carries the road upwards a few hundred feet to Wittersham, and he will pass a little old red-brick church of considerable antiquity and two cottages on the left, one of which adjoins the church. These timbered houses he will remember, for they are two of the most beautiful things in old England.

Beyond these he will come to a toll-gate which is guarded by a gnome, who will open it for you for a modest sum, to which the good-natured stranger delights to add an extra tip because of his guide's affliction. The gate—to me and to you, too, when you have heard my story—will lead you into an enchanted land, for hereafter you are at sea, though you do not know it.

Fourteen miles and more you will have to walk now if you would follow the channel until you reach salt water, but you are standing where the ships of England's Navy have sailed to and fro. The hill ahead of you is called Oxney Island, and it was once an island in fact. The church and the cottages that you have passed are the shrunken remnants of a seaport that thought no small beer of itself in the great days of the Cinque Ports, when it could boast, and did boast, that it paid more dues of shipping than Liverpool! Small Hythe was its name, but it built the King's ships, and was not so small as it sounded.

By New Romney, which was one of the ancient Five Ports, its importance was duly recognized, for had not the shipyards of this Small Hythe built them a vessel named the *Eneswitha* in the year of our Lord 1400 and launched it safely, not bungling the job as did the engineers of the *Great Eastern*, but with such skill and dispatch that the people of New Romney were more than ordinarily grateful. What ecclesiastic officiated at the launch we do not hear. Probably it was the Vicar of Tenterden, or possibly the priest-in-charge at the chapel of Small Hythe itself. Whoever it was, the needs of the church at Small Hythe were not forgotten,

SMALL HYTHE



and the jurats of New Romney decided to make a suitable gift.

Up rose a councillor, and in a few well-chosen words proposed that their present to Small Hythe should take a practical form. Let them vote a sum of money for the church, and let the people of Small Hythe decide how it should be employed. Also, let the sum be sufficient for a suitable offering from such a place as New Romney. So, to the glory of God and in token of their thankfulness at the safe launching of their ship, the jurats of New Romney voted that the sum of three shillings and fourpence should be conveyed to Small Hythe, together with a message of appreciation of that seaport's doughty service. Exactly how much three shillings and fourpence represented at that day would be difficult to determine. I should be inclined to estimate this amount as about £100, working it out by analogy with the cost of a modern sloop or small destroyer and the proportionate amount of the present. The *Eneswithe* cost £40 6s. 8d. to build.

The church to which this money was voted was not the one you see to-day, but a predecessor. The present church was built in the reign of Henry VIII. In 1514 there was a disastrous fire at Small Hythe, and the place

was almost entirely destroyed. The church and the two half-timbered houses of to-day are all that is left of the glory of the port.

There are some people who are born sceptics, and there have been superior antiquaries who have said that Small Hythe was never really upon the sea, and that all this legend of its having been an important shipbuilding place is largely a product of the imagination of writers. However, Mr. A. A. Taylor has championed the greatness of Small Hythe and scattered her enemies to the four winds in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XXX. He gives documentary evidence of its status as a seaport and of its independence from Tenterden. The people of Small Hythe, in a quaint document, petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury to grant them a parish priest and ecclesiastical dignity apart from their mother-church of St. Mildred's at Tenterden, which is "a myle and three-quarters as soome call it, and as most men call it twoo myles."

"On account of the *excessive distance* of their parish church, and also on account of the perils of the journey, the dangerous condition of the roads, the great floods and the sharp severity of the weather, are unable except on very great danger to themselves, in addition to the bodily

infirmity and weakness of some of them, are unable to have access to the aforesaid parish church of Tenterden " (February 10, 1505).

In 1509 we read a request concerning the bodies of men who " by shipwreck shall have been cast upon the seashore within the said town of Small Hythe, that they may cause them to be buried in the cemetery of the said chapel." In 1526, although the town had been burnt down and greatly reduced in importance, it appears that it still existed as a parish. John Wayte did " bequeath and ordeyne " money wherewith " to bye a chalice to goe to the use of the Chapell of Smalhith." Also, with painful memories of the days when the journey to church at Tenterden was fraught with great danger, he leaves money " to the mending of the footway betwixt Smalhith and Tenterden."

In 1532 another testator left money to " bye a canopie for the Sac'ment to hyng ov^r ye aulter there." And in the year that the First English Prayer Book was published, 1549, the inhabitants of Small Hythe, apparently now not independent of Tenterden as formerly, petition the Archbishop again. They quaintly describe themselves as " orators," and paint a gloomy word-picture of the dangers to England if an enemy should land upon the shores of

Small Hythe while the orators were at church at that well-nigh inaccessible and distant region of England which was known as Tenterden, and was, as we have seen, less than two miles distant.

All this goes to show that Small Hythe was a place of some note, and, indeed, upon the sea—"seituate harde to the sea coast" and "being opene upon the sea and a fayre landing-place." Also, we read that "the *Grand M'res* was made there," a ship of some note, and it was evidently a true bit of sea-coast, for again we read "that when rage with ffier of waters come, the people cannot pass but on horseback."

There were evidently two channels, one coming from Rye and the other from Hythe, one on each side of the Isle of Oxney.

The name of Small Hythe explains itself. Hithe is the Saxon word for a wharf or landing-stage. Hence a port is often named something hithe. Hythe, which is some fourteen miles away, was one of the Cinque Ports and situated at the entrance to the broad channel that came in here north of Romney. Thus Small Hythe may well have been a name given to distinguish the place from Hythe.

It is written Smalhed and Smallhead and also Small Light in old documents, but these

are obvious corruptions. The justification of spelling Smal hite, Smal lhte, and then Small Light is obviously some "intelligent" scribe, who, knowing that there was a lighthouse at the head of this estuary, turns the name into Small Light.

There is a good story told of a famous dispute concerning the church of Small Hythe. The antagonists were two commercial travellers, and the matter of controversy was concerning the church, not, however, theological, but architectural. Meeting one day at an inn far from Romney Marsh, they compared notes and spoke of the many years they had spent and would still spend on their lawful occasions in and around Tenterden.

Waxing eloquent, one of these ambassadors of commerce, after his fifth whisky and soda, launched out upon a word-picture of the little village of Small Hythe. He described the old timbered cottages, the green expanse of the marsh country, and the little brick church with its tiled roof, giving a final touch of red to the peaceful scene. At his last flight of eloquence the other traveller took strong exception.

"It is all very well to talk of picturesque touches of colour, but you must stick to the truth. The roof of Small Hythe Church is of

slate, and, therefore, by no stretch of imagination could it appear red."

"Nonsense," replied his friend, "the roof is tiled, and tiles are red. Perhaps they are a bit old and weathered—I will make you that concession—but they are certainly red."

"I have seen the church hundreds of times," the other retorted, "and in broad daylight, too. The roof may be purple, or mauve, or even a warm kind of grey, but never red."

"I tell you the roof is red."

"It is not. It is a blue-grey. How on earth could slates be red? If you saw the tiles red, it must be because you were not quite sober. The roof is grey or blue, or purple or mauve—never red. I say, sir, never red!"

The advocate of the red roof persisted in his view. It would be beneath his dignity, so he said, to take any notice of aspersions cast upon his habits of sobriety by one so obviously not in a position to judge. The roof could never be mauve or warm grey. He was certain that red was the colour. He believed in red. He saw red!

Each helped himself to still another drink.

"It's red," said one.

"It's not," said the other.

"'S'ed," reiterated the first speaker.

" 'S'not," doggedly maintained the second.

His friend stuck to it that red was the colour.

A fight nearly ensued, but the landlord intervened with the happy suggestion that they should have a bet on the subject. He would come with them in a car and act as referee.

They started, each full of confidence, for both passed through Small Hythe nearly every day—one from Tenterden towards Rye, and the other from Rye towards Tenterden. The slate commercial traveller was positive that they would see blue-grey, the tile commercial traveller was equally positive that they would see red.

At last the church came into sight, and to the disgust of the backer of red the roof showed as a dull blue-grey. They drove by the church in silence. The tile dreamer began to get out his money to pay up. Regretfully he looked back at the little church that had so woefully deceived him, and lo ! a miracle happened : the roof of the church had become bright red.

Each was right in what he affirmed and wrong in what he condemned, as are most church controversialists. One side of the church is roofed with slate and the other side with tiles. Neither of these travellers had thought of looking back, and each carried with

him a true image of its colour as he set eyes on it every day.

I have been told that when the roof was last repaired the people of Wittersham made themselves responsible for one side and the people of Small Hythe for the other, and each chose different material.

The sketch I have made on page 141 shows the church of Small Hythe from the Tenterden side and beyond it there can be seen a strip of the marsh which formerly made an arm of the sea. Down this channel sailed the good ship *Eneswith*, five hundred and twenty nine years ago, in the days when Small Hythe was great.

IX

THE CLUE OF THE MAGIC
STEEPLE

IX

THE CLUE OF THE MAGIC STEEPLE

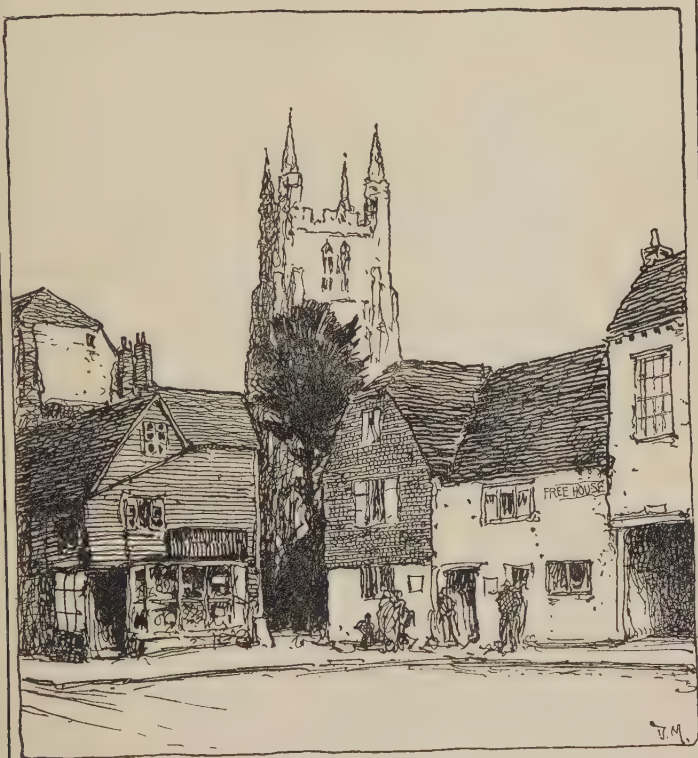
THE story of the legend, Tenterden Tower causing The Goodwin Sands, and the reasons and explanations given for this belief have been much discussed. I, myself, have taken a hand in it, and if you are interested in the subject as a problem of the growth of local legend you will find it dealt with as "The Riddle of Tenterden Tower" in *Unknown Kent*. To-day, however, we must touch on this wonder of a magic steeple bewitching the port of Sandwich. The legend is an important clue in the revealing of the old coast-line of Kent and of its lost seas.

In the reign of Henry VIII the harbour of Sandwich had become so choked with sand that an inquiry was held, under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas More, to see what could be done. A somewhat lengthy and tedious review of the causes that had led up to the unfortunate

state of things was relieved by the amusing "evidence" of the oldest inhabitant, a man born at Small Hythe, in Kent, some hundred and five years previously. He emphatically declared that the building of the great tower of Tenterden Church had done the harm. It was a magic steeple, in his opinion, and had cast a spell upon poor Sandwich. His evidence was received with roars of laughter and became a great joke. But many a true word is spoken in jest, and facts were facts, and the fact that Tenterden got most of the trade and Sandwich little was a difficult thing to explain.

After a time the joke passed into a belief and most wonderful and ingenious explanations have been invented to demonstrate how Tenterden Tower caused the Goodwin Sands.

Fig. 5 shows Romney Marsh and the region by Dungeness as I imagine it would have been in the year 1461, the date of the building of Tenterden's famous steeple. As we have seen in Chapter VII, the great storm that made the new mouth of the Rother choked up the old one in 1287, nearly two hundred years before. There is every reason, however, to believe that this channel did not altogether become unnavigable at high-water till about fifty years after this court of inquiry



A CORNER OF TENTERDEN

concerning the silting up of Sandwich Haven. In 1661 we find evidence of both Lydd and New Romney being high and dry.

It was in 1337, exactly fifty years after the great storm and the change in the channels, that letters patent were granted to certain landowners to reclaim portions of the old trench of the river now much shrunk in size. These innings, judging from such walls as are visible to-day, were made from the Rhee Wall southwards, thus pushing the remnants of the tidal river further out. At Fairfield is a homestead known as Becket's Farm. Here are some innings called Thomas Innings. These no doubt tell us of the period when Thomas Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury, and show that some at least of this extension southwards of the Rhee Wall was begun before the choking up of the channel. Probably the trench of the river at its deepest part was south of the region where Fairfield and Brookland now stand. It ran along, more or less parallel with the Rhee Wall, until near Lydd, where it turned a little northwards and flowed into the sea between that island and New Romney.

It would appear, therefore, that the channel which originally ran along close under the Rhee Wall had been driven southwards gradually by

partial innings long before the great catastrophe. The names Coldharbour and Caldecot on the north bank of this presumed river seem to me evidence, slender enough if you will, that they were places connected with wharves or ware-



FIG. 5

houses for ships and fishing vessels which, when the water left them, had become disused and took the usual old English name for ruined works of a previous age. The Coldharbours, so frequent on Roman roads, were often remains of

spaciously built villas fallen into decay, but yet able to function as rough shelters for wayfarers.

It has often been stated that Tenterden Tower carried upon it a beacon for guiding ships at sea. It was no doubt used for signalling, as it stands high and is visible from afar, but I am inclined to doubt that the "magic" of this steeple had much to do with bringing ships into Tenterden's port, Small Hythe. It is to-day visible from Lydd and a ship pursuing its way up this channel, which we have assumed still to be a tidal waterway navigable after the year 1461, would keep it in sight until nearing Stone on Oxney Island. After that the tower would be masked by hills or headlands, and so no longer serviceable as a beacon. I have verified this statement by very careful and exhaustive experiments from the marsh levels as we follow the track of our imaginary ship across the grassland. We may dispose of the superstition that the "magic" of the tower consisted in this beacon flare for there is no doubt if Tenterden carried a light for the guiding of ships much more should we expect lighthouses in the towers of Stone, Snargate, and on Chapel Bank, where they would indeed be serviceable to vessels finding their way up narrowing waters. The name Chapel Bank is interesting, for it is

suitable for some piece of land sticking up in the middle of a channel. There is now no building upon this ridge,¹ but there are grave-stones still there, and some are as recent as last year. It is evidently still a burying-ground for the marsh, but there are no roads to it, only a rough path over the turf. I have made in Fig. 6 a highly imaginary sketch of the channel off Oxney Island, showing the church towers that a pilot would have seen if he were approaching Stone. Appledore would be on his starboard bow, Chapel Bank ahead, and Tenterden Tower showing far beyond and a little to the left.

The real reason for Tenterden's successful rivalry with Sandwich was not of course anything to do with its steeple or its alleged light for ships. These were symptoms, not causes, of its prosperity. With cargoes of wool and iron—for Tenterden was one of the outposts of the great Black Country of the Middle Ages—it was both to the sailing master and to the merchant a better proposition than Sandwich which offered a dangerous entrance and diminished trade.

In the opinion of the ancient Cinque Port of Sandwich, Tenterden was a mushroom city, a

¹ The building, Ebony Church, was moved, stone by stone, and re-erected at Reading Street about a hundred years ago.

hotbed of upstart profiteers who were no better than they ought to be. Therefore the old man of Sandwich right roundly abused the tower that had brought such bad luck to his town. It was a "fayre fyshpole," and that was all that could be said about it.

This is our last clue, and the various stories about Tenterden Tower have brought vividly

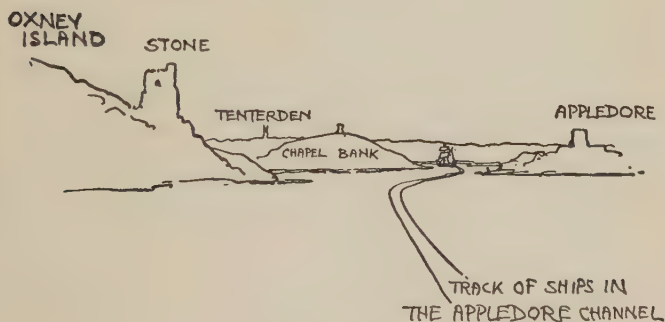


FIG. 6

before us the utterly changed condition of the sea-coast of Kent in this part. Before we leave it, however, we cannot help noticing one prominent feature of the marsh scenery, and although it does not concern our quest as to lost seas, it does affect the appearance of the marsh to-day. This is the Royal Military Canal. From the high ground of Oxney it can

be seen stretching across the marsh like a great green caterpillar.

It starts tree-bordered from Hythe and keeps along the foot of the hills. Then it takes an adventurous plunge into the open and crosses the marsh to Stone. Again it runs along the foot of higher country and again takes to the open, this time marching down to Rye and beyond it, ending somewhat ignominiously at the end of Pett Level, for it was a work that was never finished.

It is difficult to judge now of what serious value the system of defence was worth. We need not worry about it, but can instead enjoy the delightful waters of the cool green vista of the canal at Hythe.

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